THE

Jeruſalem-Sinner Saved:

OR,

GOOD NEWS

FOR RHE

Vileſt of Men,

Being a HELP for
DESPAIRING SOULS:

SHEWING
That Jeſus Chriſt would have Mercy in the firſt Place offered to the

BIGGEST SINNERS.

The Third Edition.

In which is added, An Anſwer to thoſe Grand Objections that lie in the way of them that would believe: For the Comfort of thoſe that fear they have ſinned againſt the Holy Ghoſt.

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TO THE
READER.

Courteous Reader,

ONE reaſon which moved me to Write and Print this Little Book, was, becauſe, tho' there are many Excellent Heart-affecting Diſcourſes in the World that tends to Convert the Sinner; yet I had a deſire to try this ſimple Method of mine: Wherefore I Make bold *thus* to Invite and Encourage the *Worſt* to come to *Chriſt* for Life.

I have been Vile *my ſelf*, but have obtained Mercy, and I would have my Companions in Sin partake of Mercy too, and therefore I have *writ* this Little Book.

The Nation doth ſwarm with Vile Ones *now*, as ever it did ſince it was a Nation. My Little Book in ſome places can ſcarce go from Houſe to Houſe,

but 'twill find a ſuitable Subject to ſpend it ſelf upon. Now ſince *Chriſt Jeſus* is willing to ſave the Vileſt, why ſhould they not by Name be ſomewhat acquainted with it, and bid come to him under that Name?

A great Sinner, when Converted, ſeems a booty to *Jeſus Chriſt* he gets by ſaving ſuch an one; why then ſhould both *Jeſus* loſe his Glory, and the Sinner loſe his Soul at once, and that for want of an Invitation?

I have found through God's grace, good ſucceſs in Preaching upon this Subject, and *perhaps* ſo I may, by my writing upon it too. I have, as you ſee, let down this Net for a draught, the Lord catch ſome great Fiſhes by it, for the magnifying of this Truth. There are ſome moſt Vile in *all* Mens eyes, and ſome are ſo in their *own* eyes too; but ſome have their Paintings to ſhroud their vileneſs under, yet they are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do: And

for

for all these, God hath sent a Saviour *Jesus*: and to all these the Door is opened.

Wherefore prethee, Profane Man, give this little Book the reading. Come; Pardon, and a part in Heaven and Glory, cannot be hurtful to thee. Let not thy Lusts and Folly drive thee beyond the door of Mercy, since it is not lockt nor Bolted up against thee. *Manasseh* was a bad *Man*, and *Magdalen* a bad *Woman*: To say nothing of the *Thief* upon the *Cross*, or of the *Murderers* of *Christ*; yet they obtained *mercy*; *Christ* willingly received them.

And dost thou *think* that those once so bad, now they are in *Heaven*, *repent* them there, *because* they left their *sins* for *Christ* when they were in the *world*? I cannot *believe* but that *thou thinkest* they have verily got the *best* on't. Why *Sinner*, do thou likewise: *Christ* at *Heaven* Gates, says to thee, *Come hither*; and the *Devil* at *the Gates* of *Hell* does call thee *to come to him*. *Sinner*, what

ſayeſt thou? Whither wilt thou go? Don't go into the *Fire*, there *thou* wilt be *burned!* Don't let *Jeſus* loſe his *longing*, ſince 'tis for *thy Salvation*; but *come to him and live.*

One word more and ſo I have done. *Sinner*, here *thou* doſt hear of *Love*, prethee don't *provoke* it, *by turning it into wantonneſs.* He that dies for *ſlighting Love*, ſinks *deepeſt into Hell*, and will *there* be *tormented* by the *remembrance* of that *evil* more than by the *deepeſt cogitation* of all his *other ſins.* Take *heed* therefore, do not make *Love* thy *Tormentor*, *Sinner.*

Farewell.

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GOOD NEWS
For the Vileſt of Men.
OR,
A Help for Deſpairing Souls.

Luke xxiv. 47.
—— *Beginning at Jeruſalem.*

THE whole Verſe runs thus: *And that repentance and remiſſion of Sins ſhould be preached in his Name among all Nations, beginning at Jeruſalem.*

The Words were ſpoken by Chriſt after he roſe from the Dead, and they are *here* rehearſed after an Hiſtorical manner, but do contain in them a formal Commiſſion, with a ſpecial *Clauſe*, therein. The Commiſſion is, as you ſee, for the Preaching of the Goſpel, and is very diſtinctly inſerted in the Holy Record by *Matthew* and *Mark*. *Go teach all Nations, &c.* *Go ye into all the World and preach the Goſpel unto every Creature,* *Mat.*

Matt. 28. 19. *Mark* 16. 15. Only this *Clauſe* is in ſpecial mentioned by *Luke*, who ſaith, That as Chriſt would have the Doctrine of Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins preached in his Name among all Nations, ſo he would have the People of *Jeruſalem* to have the firſt proffer thereof. *Preach it*, ſaith Chriſt, *in all Nations: but begin at Jeruſalem.*

The Apoſtles then, though they had a Commiſſion ſo large as to give them Warrant to go and preach the Goſpel in all the World, yet by *this Clauſe* they were limited, as to the beginning of their Miniſtry: They were to *begin* this Work at *Jeruſalem. Beginning at Jeruſalem.*

Before I proceed to an Obſervation upon the Words, I muſt (but briefly) touch upon two things: Namely.

1. Shew you what *Jeruſalem now* was.
2. Shew you what it was to preach the Goſpel to them.

For the firſt, *Jeruſalem* is to be conſidered of, either,

1. With reſpect to the deſcent of her People: Or.
2. With reſpect to her Preference and Exaltation: Or,
3. With reſpect to her preſent State, as to her Decays.

Firſt,

Firſt, As to her *Deſcent*: She was from *Abraham*, the Sons of *Jacob*, a People that God ſingled out from the reſt of the Nations to ſet his love upon them.

Secondly, As to her *Preference*, or Exaltation, ſhe was the place of God's Worſhip, and *that* which had in, and with her, the ſpecial Tokens and Signs of God's Favour and Preſence, above any other People in the World. Hence the Tribes went up to *Jeruſalem* to Worſhip, there was God's Houſe, God's High Prieſt, God's Sacrifices accepted, and God's Eye and God's Heart perpetually, *Pſal.* 76. 1, 2. *Pſal.* 122. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 1 *King.* 9. 3. But.

Thirdly, We are to conſider *Jeruſalem* alſo in her Decays; for as ſhe is ſo conſidered, ſhe is the proper object of our Text, as will be further ſhewed by and by.

Jeruſalem, as I told you, was the place and ſeat of God's Worſhip, but *now* decayed, degenerated, and apoſtatized. The Word, the Rule of Worſhip, was rejected of them, and in its place they had put and ſet up their own Traditions. They had rejected alſo the moſt weighty Ordinances, and put in the room thereof their own little things, (*Mat.* 15. *Mat.* 7.

7.) *Jeruſalem* was therefore now greatly back-ſlidden, and become the place where Truth and True Religion was much defaced.

It was alſo now become the very ſink of Sin, Seat of Hypocriſie, and the Gulf where true Religion was drowned. Here alſo now reigned Preſumption, and groundleſs Confidence in GOD, which is the bane of Souls. Amongſt its Rulers, Doctors, and Leaders, Envy, Malice, and Blaſphemy vented it ſelf againſt the Power of Godlineſs, in all places where it was eſpied: As alſo againſt the Promoters of it; yea, their Lord and Maker could not eſcape them.

In a Word, *Jeruſalem* was now become the Shambles, the very Slaughter-ſhop for Saints. This was the place wherein the Prophets, Chriſt, and his People, were moſt horribly perſecuted and murdered. Yea, ſo hardned at *this* time was this *Jeruſalem* in her Sins, that ſhe feared not to commit the biggeſt, and to bind her ſelf by Wiſh under the guilt and damning evil of it; ſaying, when ſhe had murdered the Son of God, *His Blood be upon us and our Children.*

And though *Jeſus Chriſt* did both by Doctrine, Miracles, and Holineſs of Life,

ſeek to put a ſtop to their Villanies; yet they ſhut their eyes, ſtopt their ears, and reſted not, till, as was hinted before, they had driven him out of the World. Yea, that they might, if poſſible, have extinguiſhed his Name, and exploded his Doctrine out of the World, they againſt all Argument, and in deſpite of Heaven, its mighty hand, and undeniable proof of his Reſurrection, did hire Souldiers to invent a Lye, ſaying, *His Diſciples ſtole him away from the Grave*; on purpoſe that Men might not count him the Saviour of the World, nor truſt in him for the Remiſſion of Sins.

They were, ſaith *Paul*, contrary to all Men: For they did not only ſhut up the Door of Life againſt themſelves, but forbad that it ſhould be opened to any elſe. *Forbidding us*, ſaith he, *to preach to the Gentiles, that they might be ſaved, to fill up their ſin alway*, *Matt.* 23. 35 *chap.* 15. 7, 8, 9. *Mar.* 7.6, 7, 8. *Mat.* 3.7, 8, 9. *Joh.* 8.33, 41. *Mat.* 27. 18. *Mar.* 3. 30. *Luk.* 2.65. *Mat* 23. 37. *Luk.* 13. 33, 34. *Pſal.* 2. 22, 23. *Chap.* 4. 19. *Mat.* 27. 25. *Chap.* 20. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. 1 *Theſ.* 2. 14, 15, 16.

This is the City, and *theſe* are the *People*: This is their *Character*, and *theſe* are their *Sins*. Nor can there be produced their

their parallel in all *this* World. Nay, *what* World! *what* People! *what* Nation, for Sin, and Tranſgreſſion, *could*, or *can* be compared to *Jeruſalem*! Eſpecially if you joyn to the matter of fact, the Light they ſinned againſt, and the Patience which they abuſed. Infinite was the Wickedneſs upon this account which they commited.

After all their abuſings of wiſe Men, and Prophets, God ſent unto them *John Baptiſt*, to reduce them, and then his Son to redeem them but they would be neither reduced nor redeemed, but perſecuted both to the Death. Nor did they, as I ſaid, ſtop here; the Holy Apoſtles they afterwards perſecuted alſo to Death, even ſo many as they could, the reſt they drove from them unto the utmoſt Corners.

Secondly, I come now to ſhew you what it was to preach the Goſpel to them. It was, ſaith *Luke*, to preach to them *Repentance and remiſſion of Sins in Chriſts Name*. Or as *Mark* has it, *to bid them repent and believe the Goſpel*, Mar. 1. 15. Not that Repentance is a cauſe of Remiſſion, but a ſign of our hearty reception thereof. Repentance is therefore here put to intimate, that

no

no pretended Faith of the Goſpel is good, that is not accompanied with it. And this he doth on purpoſe 'cauſe he would not have them deceive themſelves: For with what Faith can he expect remiſſion of Sins in the Name of Chriſt, that is not heartily ſorry for them? Or how ſhall a man be able to give to others a ſatisfactory account of his unfeigned ſubjection to the Goſpel, that yet abides in his impenitency?

Wherefore Repentance is here joined with Faith in the way of receiving the Goſpel. *Faith* is that without which it cannot be received *at all*: And *Repentance* that without which it cannot be received *unfeignedly*. When therefore Chriſt ſays, he would have Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins preached in his Name among all Nations; it is as much as to ſay, *I will that all men every where be ſorry for their ſins, and accept of mercy at Gods hand thorow me, leſt they fall under his wrath in the Judgment.* For as I ſaid, without Repentance, what pretence ſoever men have of Faith, they cannot eſcape the wrath to come. Wherefore *Paul* ſaith, *God commands all men every where to repent* (in order to their Salvation)

Salvation) *becauſe he hath appointed a day in the which he will Judge the World in Righteouſneſs by that man whom he hath ordained*, Acts 17. 30.

And now to come to this *Clauſe*, *Beginning at Jeruſalem:* That is, that Chriſt would have *Jeruſalem* have the firſt offer of the Goſpel.

1. This cannot be ſo commanded, becauſe they had now any more right of themſelves thereto than had any of the Nations of the World; for their Sins had diveſted them of all ſelf-deſervings.

2. Nor yet, becauſe they ſtood upon the *advance ground* with the worſt of the Sinners of the Nations. Nay, rather the Sinners of the Nations had the *advance-ground* of them. For *Jeruſalem* was long, before ſhe had added this Iniquity to her ſin, worſe than the very Nations that God caſt out before the Children of *Iſrael*, 2 *Chron.* 33.

3. It muſt therefore follow that this *Clauſe*, *Begin at Jeruſalem*, was put into this Commiſſion of meer Grace and Compaſſion; Even from the *overflowings* of the Bowels of Mercy. For indeed they were the worſt, and ſo in the moſt deplorable condition, of any People under the Heavens. Whatever

Whatever therefore their relation was to *Abraham*, *Isaac*, or *Jacob*, however they formerly had been the People among whom God had placed his Name and Worship, they were now degenerated from God more than the Nations were from their Idols, and were become guilty of the higheſt Sins which the People of the World were capable of committing. Nay, none can be capable of committing of ſuch *pardonable* Sins as they committed againſt their God, when they ſlew his Son, and perſecuted his Name, and Word.

From theſe Words therefore thus explained, we gain this Obſervation;

That Jeſus Chriſt would have mercy offered in the firſt place to the biggeſt Sinners.

That theſe *Jeruſalem* Sinners were the biggeſt Sinners that ever were in the World, I think none will deny, that believes that Chriſt was the beſt Man that ever was in the World, and alſo was their Lord God. And that they were to have the firſt *offer of his Grace*, the Text is as clear as the Sun; for it ſaith, *Begin at Jeruſalem. Preach*, ſaith he, *Repentance and remiſſion of Sins to the Jeruſalem-ſinners*; to the *Jeruſalem-ſinners* in the *firſt place*,

One

One would a-thought, ſince the *Jeruſalem-ſinners* were the worſt, and greateſt Sinners, Chriſt's greateſt enemies, and thoſe that not only deſpiſed his Perſon, Doctrine, and Miracles, but that a little before had had their hands up to the elbows in his Heart-bloud, That he ſhould rather have ſaid, Go into all the World, and preach Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins among all Nations; and after that, offer the ſame to *Jeruſalem*. Yea, it had been infinite Grace, if he had ſaid ſo. But what Grace is this? Or what Name ſhall we give it, when he commands that this Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins, which is deſigned to be preached in all Nations, ſhould firſt be offered to *Jeruſalem*, in the firſt place to the worſt of Sinners:

Nor was this the firſt time that the Grace which was in the Heart of Chriſt, *thus* ſhewed it ſelf to the World. For while he was *yet alive*, even while he was yet *in Jeruſalem*, and perceived even among theſe *Jeruſalem-ſinners*, which was the moſt vile amongſt them; he ſtill in his preaching did ſignifie that he had a deſire that the worſt of *theſe* worſt ſhould in the *firſt place* come unto him. The which he ſheweth where he ſaith to the better

better ſort of them, *The Publicans and Harlots enter into the Kingdom of God before you*, Matt. 21. 13. Alſo when he compared *Jeruſalem* with the Sinners of the Nations, then he commands that the *Jeruſalem-ſinners* ſhould have the Goſpel at preſent confined to them. *Go not* ſaith he, *into the way of the Gentiles, and into any of the Cities of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the loſt Sheep of the houſe of Iſrael*, Matt. 10. 5, 6. chap. 23. 37. But go *rather* to them, for they were in the moſt fearful *plight*.

Theſe therefore muſt have the *Cream* of the Goſpel, namely, the firſt *offer* thereof in his Life-time: Yea, when he departed out of the World, he left this as part of his laſt Will with his Preachers, that they alſo ſhould offer it *firſt* to *Jeruſalem*. He had a mind, a careful mind, as it ſeems, to priviledge the worſt of Sinners with the firſt offer of Mercy, and to take from among *them* a People to be the firſt fruits unto God and to the Lamb.

The fifteenth of *Luke* alſo is famous for this, where the Lord Jeſus takes more care, as appears there by three Parables, for the loſt Sheep, loſt Groat, and the Prodigal Son, than for the other Sheep, the other Pence, or for the Son that ſaid he

he had never transgressed. Yea, he shews that there is Joy in Heaven, among the Angels of God, at the repentance of one Sinner, more than over Ninety and nine Just Persons, which need no repentance, *Luke* 15.

After this manner therefore the mind of Christ was set on the Salvation of the biggest Sinners in his Life-time. But joyn to this, *this* Clause, which he carefully put into the Apostles Commission to preach, when he departed hence to the Father; and then you shall see that his Heart was vehemently set upon it, for these were part of his last words with them, *Preach my Gospel to all Nations, but see that you begin at Jerusalem.*

Nor did the Apostles overlook *this* Clause, when their Lord was gone into Heaven: They went *first* to them of *Jerusalem*, and preached Christ's Gospel to them. They abode also there for a season and time, and preached it to no body else, for they had regard to the Commandment of their Lord.

And it is to be observed, namely, that the first Sermon which they preached after the Ascension of Christ, it was preached to the very worst of these *Jerusalem-sinners*;

ſinners; even to thoſe that were the murderers of *Jeſus Chriſt*, Acts 2. 23. For theſe are part of the Sermon: *Ye took him, and by wicked hands have Crucified and ſlain him.* Yea the next Sermon, and the next, and alſo the next to that, was preached to the ſelf-ſame murderers, to the end they might be ſaved, *Acts* 3. 14, 15, 16. *chap.* 4. 10, 11. *chap.* 5. 30. *chap.* 7. 52.

But we will return to the firſt Sermon that was preached to thoſe *Jeruſalem ſinners*, by which will be manifeſt more than great Grace, if it be duly conſidered.

For after that *Peter* and the reſt of the Apoſtles, had in their Exhortation perſwaded theſe Wretches to believe that they had killed the Prince of Life, and after they had duly fallen under the guilt of their Murder, ſaying, *Men and Brethren, what ſhall we do?* He replies by an univerſal Tender to them all in general, conſidering them as *Chriſt*-killers, *That if they were ſorry for what they had done, and would be Baptized for the Remiſſion of their ſins in his Name, they ſhould receive the gift of the Holy Ghoſt*, Acts 2. 37, 38.

This he ſaid to them all, though he knew that they were ſuch ſinners. Yea,

he ſaid it without the leaſt ſtick, or ſtop, or pauſe of Spirit, as to whether he had beſt to ſay ſo or no. Nay, ſo far off was *Peter* from making an Objection againſt one of them, that by a particular Clauſe in his Exhortation, he endeavours, that not one of them may eſcape the Salvation offered. *Repent* ſaith he, *and be Baptized every one of you.* I ſhut out *never a one of you.* For I am commanded by my Lord, to deal with you, as it were, one by one, by the Word of his Salvation. But why ſpeaks he ſo particulary? Oh! there were reaſons for it. The People with whom the Apoſtles were now to deal, as they were Murderers of our Lord, and to be charged in the general with his Blood, ſo they had their various and particular acts of Villany in the guilt thereof, now lying upon their Conſciences. And the guilt of theſe their various and particular acts of wickedneſs, could not perhaps, be preached to a removal thereof, but by this particular Application. Repent *every one of you*, be Baptized *every one of you*, in his Name, for the Remiſſion of Sins, and you ſhall, *every one of you*, receive the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt.

Object. *But I was one of them that plotted to take away his Life: May I be ſaved by him?*

Peter.

Peter. Every one of you.

Object. *But I was one of them that bare false Witness against him: Is there Grace for me?*

Peter. For every one of you.

Object. *But I was one of them that cryed out, Crucifie, Crucifie him; and that desired that* Barabbas *the Murderer might live, rather than him. What will become become of me, think you?*

Peter: I am to preach Repentance and Remission of Sins to *every one of you*, says *Peter.*

Object. *But I was one of them that did spit in his face when he stood before his Accusers. I also was one that mocked him, when in anguish he hanged bleeding on the tree. Is there room for me?*

Peter. For every one of you, says *Peter.*

Object. *But I was one of them that in his extremity said, Give him Gall and Vinegar to drink; why may not I expect the same, when anguish and guilt is upon me?*

Peter. Repent of these your wickednesses, and here is remission of sins *for every one of you.*

Object. *But I railed on him, I reviled him, I hated him, I rejoyced to see him mocked at by others. Can there be hopes for me?*

Peter. There is for every one of you.

Repent and be Baptized every one of you, in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the Remiſſion of Sins, and ye ſhall receive the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt. Oh! what a bleſſed *Every one of you*, is here! How willing was *Peter* and the Lord *Jeſus*, by his Miniſtry, to catch theſe Murderers with the Word of the Goſpel, that they might be made *Monuments* of the Grace of God! How unwilling, I ſay, was he, that any of theſe ſhould eſcape the hand of Mercy! Yea, what an amazing wonder is it, to think, that above all the World, and above every body in it, *Theſe* ſhould have the firſt offer of Mercy! *Beginning at Jeruſalem.*

But was there not ſomething of moment in *this Clauſe* of the Comiſſion? Did not *Peter*, think you, ſee a great deal in it, that he ſhould *thus* begin with *theſe* men, and *thus* offer, ſo particularly, *this* Grace to each particular man of them?

But, as I told you, This is not all. Theſe *Jeruſalem-ſinners* muſt have this offer again and again; *Every one of them*, muſt be offered it over and over. Chriſt would not take their firſt rejection for a denial; nor their ſecond repulſe for a denial: But he will have Grace offered once, and twice, and thrice, to theſe *Jeruſalem-ſinners.* Is not this amazing Grace! Chriſt will

will not be put off. These are the *Sinners*, that are sinners *indeed*. They are Sinners of the biggest sort, consequently such as Christ can, if they convert and be saved, best serve his ends and designs upon. Of which more anon

But what a pitch of Grace is this! Christ is minded to amaze the World, and to shew that he acteth not like the Children of men. This is that which he said of old, *I will not execute the fierceness of my wrath, I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for I am God and not Man*, Hos. 11. 9. This is not the manner of Men; Men are shorter winded; Men are soon moved to take Vengeance, and to right themselves in a way of Wrath and Indignation. But God is full of Grace, full of Patience, ready to Forgive, and one that delights in Mercy. All this is seen in our Text. The biggest sinners must *First* be offered Mercy; they must I say, have the Cream of the Gospel offered unto them.

But we will a little proceed. In the Third Chapter we find, that they who escaped Converting by the first Sermon, are called upon again, to accept of Grace and Forgiveness for their Murder committed upon this Son of God. You have killed; yea, *you have denyed the*

Holy one and the Just, and desired a Murderer to be granted unto you. And killed the Prince of Life. Mark He falls again upon the very Men that actually were, as you have it in the Chapters following, his very *Betrayers and Murderers*, Acts 3. 14, 15. As being loth that they should escape the mercy of Forgiveness. And Exhorts them again to repent, *that their sins might be blotted out*, Ver. 19, 20.

Again, in the fourth Chapter, he charges them afresh with this Murder, *Ver.* 10. But withall tells them *Salvation is in no other.* Then like a heavenly *Decoy*, he puts himself also among them, to draw them the better under the Net of the Gospel; saying, *There is none other Name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*, Ver. 12.

In the fifth Chapter you find them railling at him, because he continued preaching among them Salvation in the Name of *Jesus.* But he tells them, That that very *Jesus* whom they had slain and hanged on a Tree, him God had raised up, and exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance to *Israel*, and Forgiveness of Sins, *Ver.* 29, 30, 31. Still insinuating, that tho they had killed him, and to this day rejected him,

him, yet his buſineſs was to beſtow upon them, Repentance and Forgiveneſs of Sins.

'Tis true, after they began to kill again, and when nothing but killing would ſerve their turn; then they that were ſcattered abroad, went every where preaching the Word. Yet even ſome of them ſo hankered after the Converſion of the *Jews*, that they preached the Goſpel only to them. Alſo the Apoſtles ſtill made their abode at *Jeruſalem*, in hopes that they might yet let down their Net for another draught of theſe *Jeruſalem-ſinners*. Neither did *Paul* and *Barnabas*, who were the Miniſters of God to the *Gentiles*, but offer the Goſpel in the firſt place to thoſe of them that for their wickedneſs were ſcattered like Vagabonds among the Nations. Yea, and when they rendered Rebellion and Blaſphemy for their Service and Love; they replyed, *It was neceſſary that the Word of God ſhould firſt have been ſpoken to them*, *Acts* 1. 8. *chap.* 13. 46, 47.

Nor was this their Preaching unſucceſsful among theſe People: But the Lord *Jeſus* ſo wrought with the Word *thus* ſpoken, that thouſands of them came flocking to him for Mercy. Three thouſand of them cloſed with him at the firſt;

and afterwards two thousand more; for now they were in number about five thousand; whereas before Sermons was preached to these Murderers, the number of the Disciples were *not above a hundred and twenty*, Acts 1. 15. *chap.* 2. 41. *Chap.* 4. 4.

Also among these People that thus flocked to him for Mercy, there was *a great company of the Priests*, *chap.* 6. 7. Now the Priests were they that were the *greatest* of these *biggest* Sinners; they were the Ringleaders, they were the Inventors and Ringleaders in the mischief. 'Twas they that set the People against the Lord *Jesus*, and that was the cause why the uproar increased, until *Pilate* had given Sentence upon him. *The chief Priests and Elders*, says the Text, *perswaded* (the People) *the multitude, that they should ask* Barabbas, *and destroy Jesus*, Mat. 27. 20. And yet *behold*, the Priests, yea, a *great* company of the Priests, *became obedient to the Faith.*

Oh the Greatness of the Grace of *Christ*! That he should be thus in love with the Souls of the *Jerusalem sinners!* That he should be thus delighted with the Salvation of the *Jerusalem-sinners*! That he should not only *will* that his Gospel should be offered them, but that it

should

ſhould be offered unto them *firſt*, and *before* other Sinners were admitted to a hearing of it; *Begin at Jeruſalem*

Was this Doctrine well believed, where would there be place for a doubt, or a fear of the Damnation of the Soul, if the Sinner be penitent; How bad a Life ſoever he has lived, how many ſoever in number are his ſins!

But this Grace is hid from the Eyes of Men, the Devil hides it from them; for he knows it is alluring; he knows it has an attracting Vertue in it. For this is it, that above all Arguments can draw the Soul to God.

I cannot help it, but muſt let drop another Word: The firſt Church, the *Jeruſalem*-Church, from whence the Goſpel was to be ſent into all the World; was a Church made up of *Jeruſalem-ſinners*. Theſe great Sinners were here the moſt ſhining Monuments of the exceeding Grace of God.

Thus you ſee, I have proved the Doctrine; and that, not only by ſhewing you, that this was the practice of the Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* in his Life-time; but his laſt Will, when he went up to God; ſaying, *Begin to preach at Jeruſalem.*

Yea, it is yet further manifeſted, in that when his Miniſters firſt began to preach there, he joyned his Power to the Word, to the Converting of thouſands of his Betrayers and Murderers; and alſo many of the Ringleading Prieſts, to the Faith.

I ſhall now proceed, and ſhall ſhew you,

1. *The Reaſons of the point.*

2. *And then make ſome Application of the whole.*

The Obſervation you know, is this, *Jeſus Chriſt would have mercy offered in the firſt place to the biggeſt Sinners*, to the *Jeruſalem-ſinners*; *Preach Repentance, and remiſſion of ſins, in my Name, among all Nations, Beginning at Jeruſalem.*

The Reaſons of the Point are,

Firſt, *Becauſe the biggeſt Sinners have moſt need thereof.* He that has moſt need, Reaſon ſays, ſhould be helped firſt. I mean, when a helping hand is offered, and now it is. For the Goſpel of the Grace of God is ſent to *help* the World, *Acts* 16. 9. But the biggeſt Sinner has moſt need. Therefore in reaſon, when Mercy is ſent down from Heaven to men, the worſt of men ſhould have the *firſt* offer of it. *Begin at Jeruſalem.* This is the reaſon which the Lord *Chriſt* himſelf renders,

renders, why in his Life-time he left the beſt, and turned him to the worſt; why he ſat ſo looſe from the Righteous, and ſtuck ſo cloſe to the Wicked. *The whole*, ſaith he, *have no need of the Phyſician, but the ſick. I came not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance*, Mark 2. 15, 16, 17.

Above, you read, that the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* ſaid to his Diſciples, *How is it that he eateth and drinketh with Publicans and Sinners?* Alas, they did not know the reaſon. But the Lord renders them one, and ſuch an one as is both natural and cogent; Saying, *Theſe* have *need, moſt need.* Their great neceſſity requires that I ſhould be moſt friendly, and ſhew my grace *firſt* to them.

Not that the other were ſinleſs, and ſo had *no* need of a Saviour: But the *Publicans* and their Companions, were the biggeſt ſinners, they were, as to view, worſe then the *Scribes*, and therefore in reaſon ſhould be helped firſt, becauſe they had moſt need of a Saviour.

Men that are at the point to dye, have more need of the Phyſician, than they that are but now and then troubled with an Heart-fainting-qualm. The Publicans and Sinners were, as it were, in the mouth of Death, Death was ſwallowing

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of them down; and therefore the Lord *Jesus* receives them first, offers them mercy first. *The whole have no need of the Physician, but the sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* The Sick, as I said, is the biggest Sinner, whether he sees his Disease or not. He stained from Head to Foot, from Heart to Life and Conversation. This man in every mans judgment, has the most need of mercy. There is nothing attends him from Bed to Board, and from Board to Bed again, but the visible characters, and obvious symptoms of eternal damnation. This therefore is the man that has need, most need, and therefore in reason should be helped in the first place. Thus 'twas with the People concerned in the Text, they were *the worst of sinners*, *Jerusalem-sinners*, sinners of the biggest size, and therefore such as had the greatest need: Wherefore they must have mercy offered to them, before it be offered any where else in the World, *Begin at Jerusalem*, offer mercy first to a *Jerusalem-sinner*: This man has most need, he is fartherst from God, nearest to Hell, and so one that has *most need*. This mans sins are in *number* the *most*, in *cry* the *loudest*, in *weight* the *heaviest*, and consequently

conſequently will ſink him ſooneſt: Wherefore he has moſt need of mercy. This man is ſhut up in Satans hand, faſteſt bound in the cords of his ſins; one that Juſtice is whetting his Sword to cut off, and therefore has moſt need, not only of mercy, but that it ſhould be extended to him in the firſt place.

But a little further, to ſhew you the true nature of this Reaſon, to wit, *That Jeſus Chriſt would have mercy offer'd in the firſt place to the biggeſt ſinners.*

Firſt, Mercy ariſeth from Bowels and Compaſſion, from Pity, and from a feeling of the Condition of thoſe in miſery. *In his Love and in his Pity, he ſaveth us.* And again, *The Lord is pitiful, very pitiful, and of great mercy*, Iſa. 63. 9. Jam. 5. 11.

Now where Pity and Compaſſion is, there is yearning of Bowels; and where there is that, there is a readineſs to help. And, I ſay again, The more deplorable and dreadful the Condition is, the more directly doth Bowels and Compaſſion turn themſelves to ſuch, and offer help and deliverance. All this flows from our firſt Scripture proof, *I came to call them that have need*; to call them *firſt*, while

while the reſt look on, and murmur. *How ſhall I give thee up, Ephraim? Ephraim* was a Revolter from God, a man that had given himſelf up to Deviliſm: A company of men, the ten Tribes, that worſhiped Devils, while *Judah* kept with his God. But *how ſhall I give thee up, Ephraim? How ſhall I deliver thee, Iſrael? How ſhall I make thee as Admah? How ſhall I ſet thee as Zeboim?* (and yet thou art worſe *than they*: *nor has Samaria committed half thy ſins*, Ezek. 16. 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51.) *My heart is turned within me, and my repentings are kindled together*, Hoſ. 11. 8.

But where do you find that ever the Lord did thus rowl in his Bowels for, and after any Self-righteous man? No, no, they are the Publicans and Harlots, Idolaters and *Jeruſalem-ſinners*, for whom his Bowels thus yearn and tumble about within him. For alas! poor Worms, they have moſt need of mercy.

Had not the good *Samaritan* more compaſſion for that man that fell among Thieves, (though *that* fall was occaſioned by his going from the place where they worſhipped God, to *Jericho*, the curſed City) than we read he had for any other beſides? His *Wine* was for him, his *Oyl* was for him, his *Beaſt* for him;

him; his *Penny*, his *Care*, and his *Swadling-bands* for him; for alas, Wretch! he had moſt need, *Luke* 10. 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35.

Zacheus the Publican, the *chief* of the Publicans, one that had made himſelf the richer by wronging of others; the Lord at that time ſingleth him out from all the reſt of his brother Publicans, and that in the face of many Phariſees, and proclaimed in the audience of them all, That that day Salvation was come to his houſe, *Luke* 19. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

The Woman alſo that had been bound down by Satan for eighteen years together, his compaſſions putting him upon it, he looſed her, though thoſe that ſtood by ſnarled at him for ſo doing, *Luke.* 13. 11, 12, 13.

And why the Woman of *Sarapeta*, and why *Naaman* the *Syrian*, rather than Widows and Lepers in *Iſrael*; but becauſe their conditions were more deplorable, (for that) they were moſt forlorn, and fartheſt from help? *Luk.* 4. 25, 27.

But I ſay, why all theſe, *thus* named? why have we not a Catalogue of ſome Holy men that were ſo in their own eyes, and in the judgment of the World? Alas! if at any time any of them are mention-

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ed, how ſeemingly coldly doth the Record of Scripture preſent them to us? *Nicodemus*, a Night-Profeſſor, and *Simon* the Phariſee, with his Fifty Pence; and their great ignorance of the methods of Grace, we have now and then touched upon.

Mercy ſeems to be out of his proper Channel when it deals with Self-righteous men; but then it runs with a full ſtream, when it extends it ſelf to the biggeſt ſinners. As God's mercy is not regulated by Man's goodneſs, nor obtained by Man's worthineſs; ſo not much ſet out by ſaving of any ſuch. But more of this anon.

And here let me ask my *Reader* a Queſtion: Suppoſe that as thou art walking by ſome Pond-ſide, thou ſhouldſt eſpy in it four or five Children all in danger of drowning, and one in more danger than all the reſt; judge which has moſt need to be helped out firſt? I know thou wilt ſay, he that is neareſt drowning. Why, this is the caſe; the bigger Sinner, the nearer drowning; therefore the bigger ſinner, the more need of mercy; Yea, of help by mercy in the firſt place. And to this our Text agrees, when it ſaith, *Beginning at Jeruſalem*. Let the *Jeruſa-*

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lem ſinner, ſays Chriſt, have the *firſt* offer, the *firſt* invitation, the *firſt* tender of my grace and mercy, for he is the biggeſt ſinner, and ſo has moſt need thereof.

Secondly, Chriſt Jeſus would have mercy offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt ſinners, becauſe when *they*, any of *them* receive it, *it redounds moſt to the fame of his Name.*

Chriſt Jeſus, as you may perceive, has put himſelf under the term of a Phyſician, a Doctor for curing of Diſeaſes: And you know that Applauſe, and a Fame, is a thing that Phyſicians much deſire. That is it that helps them to *Patients*, and that alſo that will help their *Patients* to commit themſelves to their Skill for Cure, with the more confidence and repoſe of Spirit. And the beſt way for a Doctor or Phyſician to get themſelves a Name, is in the firſt place to take in hand, and Cure ſome ſuch as all others have given off for loſt and dead. Phyſicians get neither Name nor Fame by pricking of *Weals* or picking out *Thiſtles*, or by laying of Plaiſters to the ſcratch of a *Pin*. Every old Woman can do this. But if they will have a Name and a Fame, if they will have it quickly, they muſt, as I ſaid, do ſome great and

deſperate

deſperate Cures. Let them fetch one to Life that was Dead; let them recover one to his Wits, that was Mad; let them make one that was born Blind, to See; or let them give ripe Wits to a Fool; theſe are notable Cures; and he that can do thus, and if he doth thus firſt, he ſhall have the *Name* and *Fame* he deſires; he may lye a Bed till Noon.

Why, *Chriſt Jeſus* forgiveth Sins for a Name, and ſo begets of himſelf a good Report in the hearts of the Children of men. And therefore in reaſon, he muſt be willing, as alſo he did command, that his mercy ſhould be offered firſt to the biggeſt Sinners.

I will forgive their ſins, iniquities, and tranſgreſſions, ſays he, *and it ſhall turn to me for a name of Joy, and a Praiſe, and an Honour, before all the Nations of the earth*, Jer. 33. 8, 9.

And hence it is that at his firſt appearing he took upon him to do ſuch mighty works. He got a Fame thereby; he got a Name thereby, *Mat.* 4. 23, 24.

When *Chriſt* had caſt the legion of Devils out of the man of whom you read, *Mark* 5. He bid him go home to his Friends and tell it. *Go home*, ſaith he, *to thy Friends, and tell them how great things God*

God has done for thee, and has had compaſſion one thee, Mark 5. 19. *Chriſt Jeſus* ſeeks a Name, and deſireth a Fame in the World; and therefore, or the better to obtain that, he commands that mercy ſhould firſt be proffered to the biggeſt ſinners, becauſe by the ſaving of one of them, he makes all men marvel. As 'tis ſaid of the man laſt mentioned, whom *Chriſt* cured toward the beginning of his Miniſtry: *And he departed*, ſays the Text *and began to publiſh in Decapolis, how great things Jeſus had done for him, and all men did marvel*, Ver. 20.

When *John* told *Chriſt*, that they ſaw one caſting out Devils in his Name, and they forbad him becauſe he followed not with them: What is the anſwer of *Chriſt? Forbid him not, for there is no man which ſhall do a miracle in my Name, that can lightly ſpeak evil of me.* No, they will rather cauſe his Praiſe to be heard, and his Name to be magnified, and ſo put Glory on the head of *Chriſt*.

But we will follow a little our Metaphor: *Chriſt*, as I ſaid, has put himſelf under the term of a Phyſician; Conſequently he deſireth that his Fame, as to the Salvation of ſinners, may ſpread abroad, that the World may ſee what he

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can do. And to this end, has not only commanded that the biggeſt ſinners ſhould have the firſt offer of his mercy; but has, as Phycians do, put out his Bills, and publiſhed his doings, that things may be read and talked of. Yea, he has moreover in theſe his bleſſed Bills, the Holy Scriptures, I mean, incerted the very Names of Perſons, the places of their abode, and the great Cures that by the means of his Salvations he has wrought upon them to this very end. Here is, *Item*, Such a one by my grace and redeeming Blood, was made a Monument of everlaſting Life: And ſuch a one by my perfect Obedience, became an Heir of Glory. And then he produceth their Names.

Item, I ſaved *Lot* from the guilt and damnation that he had procured to himſelf by his *inceſt*.

Item, I ſaved *David* from the Vengeance that belonged to him for committing of Adultery and Murder.

Here is alſo *Solomon*, *Manaſſeh*, *Peter*, *Magdalen*, and many others made mention of in this Book. Yea, here are their Names, their Sins, and their Salvations recorded together, that you may read, and know what a Saviour he is,

and

and do him honour in the World. For why are these things thus recorded, but to shew to Sinners what he can do, to the praise and glory of his grace?

And it is observable, as I said before, we have but very little of the Salvation of little sinners mentioned in Gods Book, because that would not have answered the design, to wit, to bring glory and fame to the Name of the Son of God.

What should be the reason, think you, why *Christ* should so easily take a denial of the great ones, that *wear* the Grandure of the World, and struggle so hard for Hedge creepers and Highway men, (as that Parable, *Luke* 14. seems to import he doth) but to shew forth the riches of the glory of his Grace to his praise? This, I say, is one Reason to be sure.

They that had their Grounds, their yoke of Oxen, and their marriage Joys, were invited to come; but they made their excuse, and that served the turn. But when he comes to deal with the worst, he saith to his Servants, Go ye *out* and *bring* them in hither. *Go out quickly and bring in hither the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind. And they did so.* And he said again, *Go out into the high ways, and Hedges, and Compel them to come*

come in, that my houſe may be filled, Luk. 14. 18, 19, 23. Theſe poor, lame, maimed, blind, hedge-creepers, and high-waymen, *Muſt* come in, *Muſt* be forced in. Theſe, if ſaved, will make his Merits ſhine.

When *Chriſt* was crucified, and hanged up between the Earth and Heavens, there was two Thieves crucified with him; and, behold, he lays hold of one of them, and will have him away with him to Glory. Was not this a ſtrange act, and a diſplay of unthought-of grace? Were there none but Thieves there, or were the reſt of that company out of his reach? Could he not, think you have ſtooped from the Croſs to the Ground, and have laid hold on ſome honeſter man if he would; Yes, doubtleſs. Oh, but then he would not have diſplayed his Grace, nor ſo have purſued his own deſigns; namely, to get to himſelf a praiſe and a name; But now he has done it to purpoſe. For who that ſhall read this Story, but muſt confeſs that the Son of God is full of grace; for a proof of the riches thereof he left behind him, when upon the Croſs, he took the Thief away with him to glory. Now can this one act of his be buried: It will be talked of to the

the end of the World to his praiſe. *Men ſhall ſpeak of the might of thy terrible acts; and will declare thy greatneſs. They ſhall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodneſs, and ſhall ſing of thy righteouſneſs. They ſhall ſpeak of the glory of thy Kingdom, and talk of thy power. To make known to the Sons of men, his mighty acts, and the glorious Majeſty of his Kingdom,* Pſal. 145. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

When the Word of God came among the Conjurers and thoſe Sooth-ſayers, that you read of *Act.* 19. and had prevailed with ſome of them to accept of the grace of *Chriſt*, the Holy Ghoſt records it with a *boaſt*, for that it would redound to his praiſe; ſaying,

And many of them that uſed curious Arts, brought their Books together and burned them before all men, and counted the price of them, and found it fifty thouſand pieces of Silver. So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed, Acts 19. 19, 20. It wrenched out of the clutches of Satan, ſome of thoſe of whom he thought himſelf moſt ſure. *So mightily grew the Word of God.* It grew mightily, it incroached upon the Kingdom of the Devil! It purſued him, and took the prey: It forced him to let go his hold! It brought

brought away captive, as Priſoners taken by force of Arms, ſome of the moſt valiant of his Army. It fetcht back from, as it were, the Confines of Hell, ſome of thoſe that were his moſt truſty, and that with Hell had been at an agreement. It made them come and confeſs their deeds, and burn their Books before all men: *So mightily grew the Word of God, and prevailed.*

Thus therefore you ſee why Chriſt will have Mercy offered in the firſt place to the biggeſt ſinners. They have moſt need thereof; and this is the moſt ready way to extol his name that rideth upon the Heavens to our help. But,

Thirdly, Chriſt Jeſus would have Mercy offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners, *Becauſe by their Forgiveneſs and Salvation, others, hearing of it, will be encouraged the more to come to him for Life.*

For the Phyſitian by curing of the moſt deſperate at the firſt, doth not only *get* himſelf a Name, but *begets* Encouragement in the minds of other diſeaſed folk to come to him for help. Hence you read of our Lord, that after, through his tender mercy, he had Cured many of great Diſeaſes, his Fame was ſpread abroad:

They

They brought unto him all ſick People that were taken with divers Diſeaſes and Torments, and thoſe which were poſſeſſed with Devils, and thoſe which were Lunatick, and thoſe that had the Palſie, and he healed them; and there followed him great multitudes of People from Galilee, *and* Decapolis, *and* Jeruſalem, *and* Judea, *and from beyond* Jordan, Mat. 4. 24, 25.

See here, He firſt by working, gets himſelf a Fame, a Name, and Renown, and now men take Encouragement, and bring from all quarters their Diſeaſed to him, being helped by what they had heard, to believe that their Diſeaſed ſhould be healed.

Now, as he did with thoſe outward Cures, ſo he does in the proffers of his Grace and Mercy; he proffers *that* in the firſt place to the biggeſt Sinners, that others may take Heart to come to him to be ſaved. I will give you a Scripture or two, I mean, to ſhew you that Chriſt by commanding that his Mercy ſhould in the firſt place be offered to the biggeſt of Sinners, has a deſign, thereby to encourage and provoke others to come alſo to him for Mercy.

God, ſaith Paul, *who is rich in Mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,*

even when we were dead in our ſins hath quickened us together with Chriſt, (by Grace ye are ſaved) and hath raiſed us up together, and made us ſit together in Heavenly places in Chriſt Jeſus. But why did he do all this? *That in the Ages to come he might ſhew the exceeding Riches of his Grace in his kindneſs towards us thorow Chriſt Jeſus*, Epheſ. 2. 4, 5, 6, 7.

See, here's a deſign, God lets out his Mercy to *Epheſus* of deſign, even to ſhew to the Ages to come, the exceeding Riches of his Grace in his kindneſs to them thorow Chriſt Jeſus. And why to ſhew by theſe, the exceeding Riches of his Grace to the Ages to come thorow Chriſt Jeſus? But to allure them, and their Children alſo to come to him, and to partake of the ſame Grace thorow Chriſt Jeſus.

But what was *Paul*, and the *Epheſian-Sinners*? (of *Paul* we will ſpeak anon) Theſe *Epheſian-Sinners*, They were men dead in Sins, men that walked according to the dictates and motions of the Devil, worſhippers of *Diana*, that Effeminate Goddeſs: Men far off from God, aliens and ſtrangers to all good things, ſuch as were far off from that, as I ſaid, and conſequently in a moſt deplorable condition. As the *Jeruſalem-Sinners* were of the higheſt

higheſt ſort among the *Jews*, ſo theſe *Epheſian-Sinners* were of the higheſt ſort among the *Gentiles*, (*Epheſ.* 2. 1, 2, 3. *Acts* 19. 35. *Epheſ.* 2. 11, 13.)

Wherefore as by the *Jeruſalem-Sinners*, in ſaving them firſt, he had a deſign to provoke others to come to him for Mercy; ſo, The ſame deſign is here ſet on foot again, in his calling and converting the *Epheſian-Sinners*; that in the Ages to come he might ſhew the exceeding Riches of his Grace, ſays he, *in his kindneſs towards us thorow Chriſt Jeſus.* There is yet one hint behind. 'Tis ſaid that God ſaved theſe FOR *his love.* That is, as I think, for the ſetting forth, for the commendations of his love, for the advance of his love in the Hearts and minds of them that ſhould come after. As who ſhould ſay, God has had Mercy upon, and been Gracious to you, that he might ſhew to others for their encouragement, that they have ground to come to him to be ſaved. *When God ſaves one great Sinner, 'tis to encourage another great Sinner to come to him for Mercy.*

He ſaved the *Thief*, to encourage *Thieves* to come to him for Mercy. He ſaved *Magdalen*, to encourage other *Magdalens* to come to him for Mercy. He ſaved

Saul, to encourage *Sauls* to come to him for Mercy. And this *Paul* himſelf doth ſay, *For this cauſe*, ſaith he, *I obtained Mercy, that in me firſt Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew forth all long ſuffering for a Pattern to them which ſhould hereafter believe on him to life everlaſting*, 1 Tim. 1. 16.

How plain are the words! Chriſt in ſaving of me, has given to the World a Pattern of his Grace, that they might ſee, and believe, and come, and be ſaved. That they that are to be born *hereafter*, might believe on Jeſus Chriſt to life everlaſting.

But what was *Paul?* Why he tells you himſelf, *I am*, ſays he, *the chief of Sinners*; *I was*, ſays he, *a Blaſphemer, a Perſecutor, an injurious Perſon: But I obtained Mercy*, 1 Tim. 1. 14, 15. Ay, that's well for you *Paul*; but what advantage have we thereby? Oh very much, ſaith he; *For, for this cauſe I obtained Mercy*, that in me *Firſt*, Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew all long ſuffering for a pattern to them which ſhall believe on him to life everlaſting.

Thus therefore you ſee this third Reaſon is of ſtrength, namely, That Jeſus Chriſt would have Mercy offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners, *becauſe, by their Forgiveneſs and Salvation, others*,

others, hearing of it, will be encouraged the more to come to him for Mercy.

It may well therefore be ſaid to God, *Thou delighteſt in Mercy, and Mercy pleaſes thee*, Mich. 7. 18.

But who believes that this was Gods deſign in ſhewing Mercy of old? Namely, That we that come after might take courage to come to him for Mercy; or that Jeſus Chriſt would have Mercy offered in the firſt place to the biggeſt Sinners, to ſtir up others to come to him for Life. This is not the manner of men! O God!

But *David* ſaw this betimes, therefore he makes this one Argument with God, That he would blot out his Tranſgreſſions, that he would forgive his Adultery, his Murders, and horrible Hypocriſie. *Do it, O Lord*, ſaith he, do it, And *then will I teach Tranſgreſſors thy ways, and Sinners ſhall be Converted unto thee*, Pſal. 51. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

He knew that the Converſion of Sinners would be a work highly pleaſing to God, as being that which he had deſigned before he made Mountain or Hill: Wherefore he comes, and he ſaith, Save me, O Lord; if thou wilt but ſave me, I will fall in with thy deſign. I will help to bring what Sinners to thee I can. And

Lord, I am willing to be made a Preacher my ſelf, for that I have been a horrible Sinner; wherefore, if thou ſhalt forgive my great Tranſgreſſions, I ſhall be a fit man to tell of thy wonderous Grace to others. Yea, Lord, I dare promiſe, that if thou wilt have Mercy upon me, it ſhall tend to the glory of thy Grace, and alſo to the increaſe of thy Kingdom; for I will tell it, and Sinners will hear on't. And there is nothing ſo ſuiteth with the hearing Sinner, as Mercy: and to be inform'd that God is willing to beſtow it upon him. *I will teach Tranſgreſſors thy ways, and Sinners ſhall be Converted unto thee.*

Nor will Chriſt Jeſus miſs of his deſign in profering of Mercy in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners. You know what work the Lord, by laying hold of the Woman of *Samaria*, made among the People there. They knew that ſhe was a *Town-Sinner*, an Adultreſs. Yea, one that after the moſt audacious manner, lived in Uncleanneſs with a man that was not her Husband. But when ſhe, from a turn upon her Heart, went into the City, and ſaid to her Neighbours, *Come*: Oh how they came! how they flocked out of the City to Jeſus Chriſt! *Then they went*

out

out of the City, and came to him, and many of the Samaritans (People perhaps as bad as her ſelf) *believed on him, for the ſaying of the woman, which teſtified, ſaying, He told me all that ever I did* (John 4. 39.)

That word, *He told me all that ever I did*, was a great Argument with them; for by that they gathered, That tho he knew her to be vile, yet he did not deſpiſe her, nor refuſe to ſhew how willing he was to communicate his Grace unto her: And this fetched over, firſt, her, then them.

This woman, as I ſaid, was a *Samaritan-Sinner*, a Sinner of the worſt Complexion. For the *Jews* abhorred to have ought to do with them (*verſ.* 9.) wherefore none more fit than ſhe to be made one of the *Decoys* of Heaven, to bring others of theſe *Samaritan-Wild-Fowls* under the Net of the Grace of Chriſt. And ſhe did the work to purpoſe. Many, and many more of the *Samaritans* believed on him, *Verſe* 40, 41, 42. The Heart of man, tho ſet on Sin, will, when it comes once to a perſwaſion that God is willing to have Mercy upon us, incline to come to Jeſus Chriſt for life; witneſs thoſe turn-a-ways from God, that you alſo read of in *Jeremiah*; for after they had heard three or four

times over, that God had Mercy for Backſliders, they broke out and ſaid, *Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.* Or as thoſe in *Hoſea* did, *For in thee the Fatherleſs find mercy.* (Jer. 3. 22. Hoſ. 14. 1, 2, 3.)

Mercy, and the revelation thereof, is the only Antidote againſt Sin. 'Tis of a thawing nature: 'twill loſe the Heart that is frozen up in Sin: yea, 'twill make the Unwilling willing to come to Jeſus Chriſt for Life.

Wherefore do you think was it that Jeſus Chriſt told the Adulterous woman, and that before ſo many Sinners, *That he had not Condemned her*, but to allure her, with them there preſent, to hope to find favour at his hands. (As he alſo ſaith in another place, *I came not to Judge, but to Save the World*) for might they not thence moſt rationally conclude, That if Jeſus Chriſt had rather ſave, than damn an Harlot, there was encouragement for them to come to him for Mercy?

I heard once a ſtory from a Souldier, who with his Company had laid Siege againſt a Fort, that ſo long as the Beſieged were perſwaded their Foes would ſhow them no favour, they Fought like Madmen; but when they ſaw one of their Fellows

Fellows taken, and received to favour, they all came tumbling down from their Fortreſs, and delivered themſelves into their Enemies hands.

I am perſwaded, did men believe that there is that Grace and Willingneſs in the Heart of Chriſt to ſave Sinners, as the Word imports there is, they would come tumbling into his Arms: But Satan has blinded their Minds, that they cannot ſee this thing. Howbeit the Lord Jeſus has, as I ſaid, that others might take Heart and come to him, given out a commandment that Mercy ſhould in the firſt place be offered to the biggeſt Sinners. *Begin*, ſaith he, *at Jeruſalem*. And thus I end the third Reaſon.

Fourthly, Jeſus Chriſt would have Mercy offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners, *Becauſe that is the way, if they receive it, moſt to weaken the Kingdom of Satan, and to keep it loweſt in every Age of the World.* The biggeſt Sinners, they are Satans *Colonels*, and *Captaines*, the Leaders of his People, and they that moſt ſtoutly make Head againſt the Son of God. Wherefore let theſe *firſt* be conquered, and his Kingdom will be weak. When *Iſhboſheth* had loſt his *Abner*, his Kingdom was made weak, nor did he ſee

but *tottering then* upon his Throne. So when Satan loſeth his ſtrong men, them that are mighty to work Iniquity, and *dextrous* to manage others in the ſame, then is his Kingdom weak (2 *Sam.* 3.) Therefore I ſay, Chriſt doth offer Mercy in the firſt place to ſuch, the more to weaken his Kingdom. Chriſt Jeſus was glad to ſee Satan fall like Lightning from Heaven, that is ſuddenly or headlong; and it was, ſurely, by caſting of him out of ſtrong Poſſeſſions, and by recovering of ſome notorious Sinners out of his Clutches, (*Luke* 10. 17, 18, 19.)

Sampſon, when he would pull down the *Philiſtians* Temple, took hold of the two main Pillars of it, and breaking them, down came the Houſe. Chriſt came to deſtroy the works of the Devil, and to deſtroy by converting Grace, as well as by redeeming Blood. Now Sin ſwarms and lieth by Legions, and whole Armies, in the Souls of the biggeſt Sinners, as in Garriſons: Wherefore the way, the moſt direct way to deſtroy it, is firſt to deal with ſuch Sinners, by the Word of his Goſpel, and by the Merits of his Paſſion.

For Example, tho I ſhall give you but a homely one; Suppoſe a Family to be very

very Lowzy, and one or two of the Family to be *in chief* the breeders; the way, the quickeſt way, to clear that Family, or at leaſt to weaken the ſo ſwarming of thoſe Vermine, is, in the *firſt place* to ſweeten the Skin, Head, and Cloaths of the *chief breeders*: And then, though all the Family ſhould be apt to breed them, the number of them, and ſo the greatneſs of that Plague there, will be the more impaired.

Why, there are ſome People that are in chief the Devils *Sin-breeders* in the Towns and places where they live. The Place, Town, or Family where they live, muſt needs be horrible lowſie, and as it were, eaten up with *Vermin*: Now let the Lord *Jeſus* in the firſt place cleanſe theſe great Breeders, and there will be given a nip to thoſe ſwarms of Sins that uſe to be committed in ſuch places throughout the Town, Houſe, or Family where ſuch *ſin-breeding* Perſons uſed to be.

I ſpeak by Experience; I was one of theſe lowzy ones, one of theſe great *ſin-breeders*; I infected all the Youth of the Town where I was born with all manner of youthful Vanities. The neighbours counted me ſo, my practiſe proved me

me ſo: Wherefore *Chriſt Jeſus* took me firſt; and taking me firſt, the Contagion was much allayed all the Town over. When God made me ſigh, they would harken, and enquiringly ſay, *What's the matter with* John? They alſo gave their various opinions of me: But as I ſaid, Sin cooled, and failed, as to his full *carrier.* When I went out to ſeek the Bread of Life, ſome of them would follow, and the reſt be put into a muſe at home. Yea, almoſt the Town, *at firſt*, at times, would go out to hear at the place were I found good: Yea, young and old for a while had ſome reformation on them; alſo ſome of them perceiving that God had mercy upon me, came crying to him for mercy too.

But what need I give you an Inſtance of poor I; I will come to *Manaſſeh* the King: So long as he was a ringleading Sinner, the great Idolater, and chief for Deviliſm, the whole Land flowed with wickedneſs; *For he made them to ſin*, and do worſe than the Heathen that dwelt round about them, or that was caſt out from before them. But when God converted him, the whole Land was reformed. Down went the Groves, the Idols, and Altars of *Baal*, and up went true Religion

ligion in much of the Power and Purity of it. You'll say, The King reformed by Power. I answer, doubtless, and by Example too; for People observe their Leaders; as their Fathers did, so did they, 2 *Chron.* 33. 2 *King.* 17. 41.

This therefore is another Reason, why *Jesus* would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners, because that is the best way, if they receive it, most to weaken the Kingdom of Satan, and to keep it poor and low.

And do you not think now, that if God would but take hold of the hearts of some of the most notorious in your Town, in your Family, or Countrey, that this thing would be verified before your faces? It would, it would, to the Joy of you that are godly, to the making of Hell to sigh, to the great suppressing of Sin, the glory of *Christ*, and the joy of the Angels of God. And Ministers should therefore, that this Work might go on, take advantages to perswade with the biggest Sinners to come into *Christ*, according to *my* Text, and *their* Commissions: *Beginning at Jerusalem.*

Fifthly, *Jesus Christ* would have mercy offered in the *first* place to the biggest sinners

me ſo: Wherefore *Chriſt Jeſus* took me firſt; and taking me firſt, the Contagion was much allayed all the Town over. When God made me ſigh, they would harken, and enquiringly ſay, *What's the matter with* John? They alſo gave their various opinions of me: But as I ſaid, Sin cooled, and failed, as to his full *carrier*. When I went out to ſeek the Bread of Life, ſome of them would follow, and the reſt be put into a muſe at home. Yea, almoſt the Town, *at firſt*, at times, would go out to hear at the place were I found good: Yea, young and old for a while had ſome reformation on them; alſo ſome of them perceiving that God had mercy upon me, came crying to him for mercy too.

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ligion in much of the Power and Purity of it. You'll ſay, The King reformed by Power. I anſwer, doubtleſs, and by Example too; for People obſerve their Leaders; as their Fathers did, ſo did they, 2 *Chron.* 33. 2 *King.* 17. 41.

This therefore is another Reaſon, why *Jeſus* would have mercy offered in the firſt place to the biggeſt ſinners, becauſe that is the beſt way, if they receive it, moſt to weaken the Kingdom of Satan, and to keep it poor and low.

And do you not think now, that if God would but take hold of the hearts of ſome of the moſt notorious in your Town, in your Family, or Countrey, that this thing would be verified before your faces? It would, it would, to the Joy of you that are godly, to the making of Hell to ſigh, to the great ſuppreſſing of Sin, the glory of *Chriſt*, and the joy of the Angels of God. And Miniſters ſhould therefore, that this Work might go on, take advantages to perſwade with the biggeſt Sinners to come into *Chriſt*, according to *my* Text, and *their* Commiſſions: *Beginning at Jeruſalem.*

Fifthly, *Jeſus Chriſt* would have mercy offered in the *firſt* place to the biggeſt

ſinners

ſinners. *Becauſe ſuch, when converted, are uſually the beſt helps in the Church againſt temptations, and fitteſt for the ſupport of the feeble minded there.* Hence, uſually, you have ſome ſuch in the firſt plantation of Churches; or quickly upon it. Churches would do but ſorrily, if *Chriſt Jeſus* did not put ſuch Converts among them; they are the Monuments and Mirrors of Mercy. The very ſight of ſuch a Sinner in God's Houſe, yea, the very thought of him, where the ſight of him cannot be had, is oft-times greatly for the help of the Faith of the feeble.

When the Churches (ſaid *Paul*) *that were in Judea, heard this concerning me, that he which perſecuted them in time paſt, now preached the Faith which once he deſtroyed, They glorified God in me*, Gal. 1. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.

Glorified God] How is that? Why, they praiſed him, and took courage to believe the more in the mercy of God: For that he had had mercy on ſuch a great ſinner as he. They glorified God [*in me*] They wondred that Grace ſhould be ſo rich, as to take hold of ſuch a Wretch as I was; and for my ſake believed in *Chriſt* the more.

There

There are two things that great sinners are acquainted with, when they come to divulge them to the Saints, that are a great relief to their Faith.

1. The Contests that they usually have with the Devil at their parting with him.

2. Their knowledge of his Secrets in his workings.

For the *First*, The biggest sinners have usually great contests with the Devil at their partings; and this is an help to Saints. For ordinary Saints find afterwards what the vile ones find at first; but when at the opening of hearts the one finds himself to be as the other, the one is a comfort to the other. The lesser sort of sinners find but little of this, till after they have been some time in profession; but the Vile Man meets with his at the beginning. Wherefore he, when the other is down, is ready to tell that he has met with the same before. For I say, he has had it before. Satan is loth to part with a great Sinner, What, my true Servant (quoth he) my old Servant, wilt thou forsake me now? Having so often sold thy self to me to work wickedness, wilt thou forsake me now? Thou horrible Wretch, dost not know,

that

that thou haſt ſinned thy ſelf beyond the reach of Grace, and doſt think to find Mercy now? Art not thou a Murderer, a Thief, a Harlot, a Witch, a ſinner of the greateſt ſize, and doſt thou look for mercy now? Doſt thou think that *Chriſt* will foul his fingers with thee?

'Tis enough to make Angels bluſh, *ſaith Satan*, to ſee ſo vile a one knock at Heaven gates for Mercy, and wilt thou be ſo abominable bold to do it? Thus Satan dealt with me, ſays the great Sinner, when at firſt I came to *Jeſus Chriſt*. *And what did you reply, ſaith the Tempted?* Why, I granted the whole Charge to be true, ſays the other. *And what, did you diſpair? or how?* No (ſaith he) I ſaid, I am *Magdalene*, I am *Zacheus*, I am the *Thief*, I am the *Harlot*, I am the *Publican*, I am the *Prodigal*, and one of *Chriſt's* Murderers: Yea, worſe than any of theſe, and yet God was ſo far off from rejecting of me (as I found afterwards) that there was muſick and dancing in his Houſe for me, and for Joy that I was come home unto him. *Oh bleſſed be God for Grace*, (ſays the other) *for then I hope there is favour for me.* Yea, as I told you, ſuch a one is a continual Spectacle in the Church; for every one *by*,

to behold God's grace, and wonder!

Secondly, And as for the Secrets of Satan, ſuch as are Suggeſtions to queſtion the Being of God, the truth of his Word, and to be annoyed with deviliſh Blaſphemies: None more acquainted with theſe than the biggeſt ſinners at their Converſion; wherefore thus alſo they are prepared to be helps in the Church to relieve and comfort the other.

I might alſo here tell you of the Conteſts and Battels that ſuch are engaged in, wherein they find the buffettings of Satan, above any other of the Saints. At which times Satan aſſaults the Soul with darkneſs, fears, frightful thoughts of Apparitions; now they ſweat, pant, cry out, and ſtruggle for life.

The Angels now come down to behold the ſight, and rejoyce to ſee a bit of Duſt and Aſhes to overcome Principalites and Powers, and Might, and Dominions. But as I ſaid, when theſe come a little to be ſetled, they are prepared for help for others, and are great Comforts unto them. Their great ſins give encouragement to the Devil to aſſault them, and by theſe temptations *Chriſt* takes advantage to make them the more helpful to the Churches.

The

The biggeſt ſinner, when he is Converted and comes into the Church, ſays to them all, by his very coming in, *Behold me, all you that are Men and Women of a low and timerous ſpirit; you whoſe hearts are narrow, for that you never had the advantage to know, becauſe your ſins are few, the largeneſs of the grace of God. Behold, I ſay, in me, the exceeding riches of his grace! I am a Pattern ſet forth before your faces, on whom you may look and take heart.* This, I ſay, the great ſinner can ſay, to the exceeding comfort of all the reſt.

Wherefore, as I have hinted before, when God intends to ſtock a place with Saints, and to make that place excellently to flouriſh with the riches of his grace, he uſually begins with the Converſion of ſome of the moſt notorious there-abouts, and lays them as an Example to allure others, and to build up when they are converted.

'Twas *Paul* that muſt go to the *Gentiles*, becauſe *Paul* was the moſt outragious of all the Apoſtles, in the time of his unregeneracy: Yea, *Peter* muſt be he that after his horrible fall, was thought fitteſt, when recovered again, to comfort and ſtrengthen his Brethren. See *Luke* 22. 31, 32. Some

Some must be Pillars in God's House, and if they be Pillars of Cedar, they must stand while they are stout and sturdy sticks in the Forrest, before they are cut down, and planted or placed there.

No Man, when he buildeth his House, makes the principal parts thereof, of weak or feeble Timber; for how could such bear up the rest? but of great and able Wood. *Christ Jesus* also goeth this way to work, he makes of the biggest Sinners, Bearers and Supporters to the rest. This then may serve for another Reason, why *Jesus Christ* gives out in Commandment, that Mercy should in the first place be offered to the biggest Sinners, *Because such when Converted, are usually the best helps in the Church against Temptations, and fittest for the support of the feeble-minded there.*

Sixthly, Another Reason, why *Jesus Christ* would have Mercy offered in the *first place* to the biggest Sinners, is, Because *They, when Converted, are apt to Love him most.*

This agrees both with Scripture, and Reason. Scripture says so. *To whom much is Forgiven, the same Loveth much. To whom little is Forgiven, the same Loveth little,*

little, Luk. 7. 47. Reaſon ſays ſo. For as it would be the Unreaſonableſt thing in the World, to render Hatred for Love, and Contempt for Forgiveneſs; ſo 'twould be as ridiculous to think that the reception of a little kindneſs ſhould lay the ſame obligations upon the Heart to Love, as the reception of a great deal. I would not diſparage the Love of *Chriſt*; I know the leaſt dram of it, when it reaches to *Forgiveneſs*, is great above all the World; But comparatively, there is greater extentions of the Love of *Chriſt*, to one, than to another: He that has moſt Sin, if Forgiven, is partaker of the greateſt Love, of the greateſt Forgiveneſs.

I know alſo, that there are ſome, that from this very Doctrine, ſay, *Let us do Evil, that Good may come*; and that turn the Grace of our God into Laſciviouſneſs. But I ſpeak not of theſe, Theſe will neither be ruled by *Grace* nor *Reaſon*. *Grace* would Teach them, if they knew it, to deny Ungodly Courſes; and ſo would *Reaſon* too, if it could truly ſenſe the Love of God, *Tim.* 2. 11, 12. *Rom.* 11. 1.

Doth it look like what hath any Coherence with Reaſon or Mercy, for a Man to abuſe his Friend? Becauſe *Chriſt* died for

for Men, ſhall I therefore Spit in his Face? The Bread and Water that was given by *Eliſha* to his Enemies, that came into the Land of *Iſrael* to take him, had ſo much influence upon their Minds, tho' *Heathens*, that they returned to their homes without hurting him: Yea, it kept them from coming again in a hoſtile manner into the Coaſts of *Iſrael*, 2 *Kings* 6. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23.

But to forbear to Illuſtrate till anon; one reaſon why *Chriſt Jeſus* ſhews Mercy to Sinners, *is that he might obtain their Love*, that he may remove their baſe affections, from baſe objects, to himſelf. Now if he loves to be loved a little, he loves to be loved much; but there is not any that are capable of loving much, ſave thoſe that have much forgiven them. Hence 'tis ſaid of *Paul*, That he laboured more than them all, to wit, with a labour of love, becauſe he had been by Sin more vile againſt *Chriſt* than they all, 1 *Cor.* 15. He it was that Perſecuted the Church of God, and Waſted it, *Gal.* 1. 13. He, of them all, was the only raving Bedlam againſt the Saints: *And being exceeding Mad*, ſays he, *againſt them, I Perſecuted them even to ſtrange Cities*, Acts 26. 11.

This

This raving Bedlam, that once was ſo, is he that now ſays, *I laboured more than them all; more for Chriſt than them all.*

But Paul, *what moved thee thus to do?* The love of *Chriſt*, ſays he. It was not I, but the grace of God that was with me. As who ſhould ſay; *O Grace!* 'Twas ſuch Grace to ſave me! 'Twas ſuch marvelous Grace for God to look down from Heaven upon me, and that ſecured me from the wrath to come, that I am captivated with the ſenſe of the riches of it. Hence I act, hence I labour; For how can I otherwiſe do, ſince God not only ſeparated me from my Sins and Companions, but ſeparated all the powers of my Soul and Body to his Service? I am therefore *prompted* on by this exceeding love, to labour as I have done; yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

Oh! I ſhall never forget his love, nor the circumſtance, under which I was, when his love laid hold upon me. I was going to *Damaſcus* with Letters from the High Prieſt to make Havock of God's People there, as I had made Havock of them in other places. Theſe bloody Letters were not impoſed upon me. I went to the High Prieſt and deſired them of him, *Acts* 9. 1, 2. And yet he ſaved me!

me! I was one of the men, of the chief men, that had a hand in the blood of his Martyr *Stephen*, yet he had mercy on me! When I was at *Damaſcus*, I ſtunk ſo horribly like a Blood-ſucker, that I became a Terrour to all thereabout. Yea, *Ananias* (good man) made interceſſion to my Lord againſt me, yet he would have mercy upon me! Yea joyned mercy to mercy, until he had made me a monument of Grace. He made a Saint of me, and perſwaded me, that my tranſgreſſions were forgiven me.

When I began to preach, thoſe that heard me were amazed; and ſaid, *Is not this he that deſtroyed them that called on this Name in Jeruſalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound to the High Prieſt?* Hell doth know that I was a Sinner; Heaven doth know that I was a Sinner: The World alſo knows that I was a Sinner, a Sinner of the greateſt ſize; but I obtained mercy, *Acts* 9. 20, 21.

Shall not this lay an Obligation upon me? Is not Love of the greateſt force to oblige? Is it not ſtrong as Death? Cruel as the Grave, and hotter than the Coals of *Juniper*? Hath it not a moſt vehement flame? Can the Waters quench it?

it? Can the Floods drown it? I am under the force of it, and this is my continual cry, *What ſhall I render to the Lord for all the Benefits which he has beſtowed upon me?*

Ay! *Paul*, this is ſomething, thou ſpeakeſt like a Man, like a man affected, and carried away with the love and grace of God. Now this ſenſe, and this affection, and this labour, giveth to *Chriſt* the love that he looks for. But he might have converted twenty little ſinners, and yet not found, for grace beſtowed, *So* much love in them all.

I wonder how far a man might go among the Converted Sinners of the ſmaller ſize, before one could find one that ſo much as looks any thing this wayward. Where is he that is thus under pangs of love for the Grace beſtowed upon him by *Jeſus Chriſt?* Excepting only ſome few; you may walk to the Worlds end and find none. But, as I ſaid, ſome there are, and ſo there has been in every age of the Church, great ſinners, that have had much forgiven them. And they love much upon this account.

Jeſus Chriſt therefore knows what he doth, when he lays hold on the hearts of

of ſinners of the biggeſt ſize. He knows that ſuch an one will love more than many that have not ſinned half their ſins.

I will tell you a Story that I have read of *Martha* and *Mary*; the Name of the Book I have forgot. I mean of the Book in which I found the Relation; but the thing was thus:

Martha, ſaith my Author, was a very holy Woman, much like *Lazarus*, her Brother; but *Mary* was a looſe and wanton creature. *Martha* did ſeldom miſs good Sermons, and Lectures, when ſhe could come at them in *Jeruſalem*; but *Mary* would frequent the houſe of Sports, and the company of the vileſt of Men for luſt. And though *Martha* had often deſired that her Siſter would go with her to hear her Preachers: Yea, had often entreated her with Tears, to do it, yet could ſhe never prevail; for ſtill *Mary* would make her excuſe, or reject her with diſdain for her Zeal and Preciſeneſs in Religion.

After *Martha* had waited long, tried many ways to bring her Siſter to good, and all proved ineffectual. At laſt, ſhe comes upon her thus: *Siſter*, quoth ſhe, *I pray thee go with me to the Temple to day, to hear one preach a Sermon.* What kind

of Preacher is he, ſaid ſhe? *Martha* replied, *It is one* Jeſus of Nazareth, *he is the handſomeſt man that ever you ſaw with your eyes. Oh! he ſhines in Beauty, and is a moſt excellent Preacher.*

Now what does *Mary?* After a little pauſe, but goes up into her Chamber, and with her Pins and her Clouts, decks up her ſelf as fine as her fingers could make her. This done, away ſhe goes, not with her Siſter *Martha*, but as much unobſerved as ſhe could, to the Sermon, or rather to *See* the Preacher.

The Hour and Preacher being come, and ſhe having obſerved whereabout the Preacher would ſtand, goes and ſets her ſelf ſo in the *Temple*, that ſhe might be ſure to have the full view of this excellent Perſon. So he comes in, and ſhe looks, and the firſt glimps of his Perſon pleaſed her. Well, *Jeſus* addreſſeth himſelf to his Sermon, and ſhe looks earneſtly on him.

Now at that time, ſaith my Author, *Jeſus* Preached about the *loſt Sheep*, the *loſt Groat*, and the *prodigal Child.* And when he came to ſhew what care the Shepherd took for one loſt Sheep, and how the Woman ſwept to find her Piece

which

which was loſt, and what Joy there was at their finding; ſhe began to be taken *by the Ears*, and forgot what ſhe came about, muſing what the Preacher would make on't: But when he came to the Application, and ſhewed that by the loſt Sheep, was meant a great Sinner; by the Shepherds care, was meant God's love for great Sinners; and that by the Joy of the Neighbours, was ſhewed what Joy there was among the Angels in Heaven over one great Sinner that repenteth; She began to be taken *by the Heart*. And as he ſpake theſe laſt words, ſhe thought he pitched his innocent Eyes juſt upon her, and looked as if he ſpake what was now ſaid, to her. Wherefore her heart began to tremble, being ſhaken with affection and fear; then her Eyes run down with tears apace; wherefore ſhe was forced to hide her face with her *Handkerchief*, and ſo ſat ſobbing and crying all the reſt of the Sermon.

Sermon being done, up ſhe gets, and away ſhe goes, and withal, inquired where this *Jeſus* the Preacher dined that day? And one told her, at the houſe of *Simon the Phariſee*. So away goes ſhe, firſt to her Chamber, and there ſtrips her ſelf of her wanton Attire; then falls upon

on her knees to ask God forgiveneſs for all her wicked life. This done, in a modeſt dreſs ſhe goes to *Simon*'s houſe, where ſhe finds *Jeſus* ſet at Dinner. So ſhe gets behind him, and weeps, and drops her tears upon his Feet like Rain, and waſhes them, and wipes them with the Hairs of her Head. She alſo kiſſed his Feet with her Lips, and anointed them with Oyntment. When *Simon* the Phariſee perceived what the Woman did, and being ignorant of what it was to be forgiven much (for he never was forgiven more than Fifty Pence.) He began to think within himſelf, that he had been miſtaken about *Jeſus Chriſt*, becauſe he ſuffered ſuch a Sinner as this Woman was, to touch him. Surely, quoth he, this Man, if he were a Prophet, would not let this Woman come near him, for ſhe is a Town Sinner, (ſo ignorant are all Self-righteous men of the way of *Chriſt* with Sinners) But leſt *Mary* ſhould be diſcouraged with ſome clowniſh carriage of this *Phariſee*, and ſo deſert her good beginnings, and her new ſteps which ſhe now had began to take towards eternal Life, *Jeſus* began thus with *Simon*: *Simon*, ſaith he, *I have ſomewhat to ſay unto thee. And he ſaith, Maſter, ſay on.*

There

There was, ſaid Jeſus, *a certain Creditor had two Debtors, the one owed him Five hundred Pence, and the other, Fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore which of them will love him moſt?* Simon *anſwered and ſaid, I ſuppoſe he to whom he forgave moſt. And he ſaid unto him, Thou haſt rightly judged. And he turned to the Woman, and ſaid unto* Simon, *Seeſt thou this Woman? I entred into thy houſe, thou gaveſt me no Water for my Feet: But ſhe hath waſhed my Feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gaveſt me no kiſs, but this Woman, ſince the time I came in, hath not ceaſed to kiſs my Feet. My Head with Oyl thou didſt not anoint, but this Woman hath anointed my Feet with Oyntment. Wherefore I ſay unto thee, Her Sins which are many, are forgiven, for ſhe loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the ſame loveth little. And he ſaid unto her, Thy Sins are forgiven,* Luk. 7. 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50.

Thus you have the Story. If I come ſhort in any Circumſtance, I beg Pardon of thoſe that can correct me. 'Tis three or four and twenty Years ſince I ſaw the Book, yet I have, as far as my memory

will admit, given you the relation of the Matter. However, *Luke*, as you ſee, doth here preſent you with the Subſtance of the whole.

Alas! *Chriſt Jeſus* has but little thanks for the ſaving of little Sinners. *To whom little is forgiven, the ſame loveth little* He gets not Water for his Feet, by his ſaving of ſuch Sinners. There are abundance of dry-eyed Chriſtians in the World, and abundance of dry-eyed Duties too: Duties that never were wetted with the tears of Contrition and Repentance, nor ever ſweetned with the great Sinners box of Oyntment. And the reaſon is, ſuch ſinners have not *great* ſins to be ſaved from; or if they have, they look upon them in the *diminiſhing-glaſs* of the Holy Law of God. But I rather believe that the Profeſſors of our days want a due ſenſe of what they are; for verily, for the generality of them, both before and ſince Converſion, they have been ſinners of a luſty ſize: But if their Eyes be holden, if Convictions are not ſhown, if their knowledge of their ſins is but like to the eye-ſight in twilight, the Heart cannot be affected with that grace that has laid hold on the man, and ſo *Chriſt Jeſus* ſows much, and has little coming in. Wherefore

Wherefore his way is oft-times to ſtep out of the way, to *Jericho*, to *Samaria*, to the Countrey of the *Gaddarens*, to the Coaſts of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, and alſo to Mount *Calvary*, that he may lay hold of ſuch kind of Sinners as will love him to his liking, *Luke.* 19. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. *John* 4. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, &c. *Mark* 5. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 81, 19, 20. *Matt.* 15. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28. *Luke* 23. 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43.

But thus much for the Sixth Reaſon, why *Chriſt Jeſus* would have Mercy offered in the firſt place to the biggeſt Sinners; to wit, becauſe ſuch ſinners when converted, are apt to love him moſt. The *Jeruſalem-ſinners* were they that out-ſtript, when they were Converted, in ſome things, all the Churches of the *Gentiles*. *They were of one heart, and of one Soul, neither ſaid any of them, that ought of the things that they poſſeſſed was their own; neither was there any among them that lacked, for as many as were poſſeſſors of Lands, or Houſes, ſold them, and brought the price of the things that were ſold, and laid them down at the Apoſtles feet*, &c. Acts 4. 32, 33, 34, 35. Now

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ſhow me ſuch another Pattern if you can. But why did theſe do thus? Oh! they were *Jeruſalem-ſinners.* Theſe were the Men that but a little before, had killed the Prince of Life, and thoſe to whom he did, that notwithſtanding, ſend the firſt offer of Grace and Mercy. And the ſenſe of this, took them up betwixt the Earth and the Heaven, and carried them on in ſuch ways and methods, as could never be trodden by any ſince. They talk of the Church of *Rome*, and ſet her in her Primitive ſtate, as a Pattern, and Mother of Churches; when the Truth is, they were the *Jeruſalem-ſinners*, when Converts, that out-did all the Churches that ever was.

Seventhly, *Chriſt Jeſus* would have Mercy offered in the firſt place to the biggeſt ſinners, becauſe *Grace, when it is received by ſuch, finds matter to kindle upon more freely than it finds in other ſinners.* Great Sinners are like the *dry Wood*, or like *great Candles*, which burns beſt and ſhines with biggeſt light. I lay not this down, as I did thoſe Reaſons before, to ſhew, that when great Sinners are Converted, they will be encouragement to others, though that is true; but to ſhew that *Chriſt* has a delight to

ſee Grace, the Grace we receive, *to ſhine*. We love to ſee Things that bear a good Gloſs, yea, we chuſe to buy ſuch kind of matter to work upon, as will, if wrought up to what we intend, caſt that luſtre that we deſire. Candles that burn not bright, we like not: Wood that is green will rather ſmother and *ſputter* and *ſmoak*, and *crack*, and *flounce*, than caſt a brave light and pleaſant heat. Wherefore great Folks care not much, not ſo much for ſuch kind of things, as for them that will better anſwer their ends.

Hence *Chriſt* deſires the biggeſt Sinner, in him there is Matter to work by, to wit a great deal of ſin; for as by the Tallow of the Candle; the Fire takes occaſion to burn the brighter; ſo by the ſin of the Soul, Grace takes occaſion to ſhine the clearer. Little Candles ſhine but little, for there wanteth matter for the Fire to work upon; but in the great Sinner, here is more matter for Grace to work by. Faith ſhines, when it worketh towards *Chriſt*, through the ſides of many and great Tranſgreſſors; and ſo does Love, for that much is forgiven. And what matter can be found in the Soul for Humility to work by ſo well, as by a ſight that I have been and am an

abominable Sinner? And the ſame is to be ſaid of Patience, Meekneſs, Gentleneſs, Self-denial, or of any other Grace. Grace takes occaſion by the vileneſs of the man, to ſhine the more; even as by the ruggedneſs, of a very ſtrong Diſtemper, or Diſeaſe, the vertue of the Medicine is the beſt made manifeſt. *Where Sin abounds, Grace much more abounds*, Rom. 5. 20. A black ſtring makes the Neck look whiter; great Sins makes Grace burn clear. Some ſay when Grace and a good Nature meet together, they do make ſhining Chriſtians; but I ſay, when Grace and a great Sinner meets, and when Grace ſhall ſubdue that great Sinner to it ſelf, and ſhall operate after its kind in the Soul of that great Sinner, then we have a ſhining Chriſtian; Witneſs all thoſe of whom mention was made before.

Abraham was among the Idolaters when in the Land of *Aſſyria*, and ſerved Idols with his Kindred on the other ſide of the Flood, *Joſ.* 24. 2. *Gen.* 11. 31. but who when called, was there in the World, in whom Grace ſhone ſo bright as in him?

The *Theſſalonians* were Idolaters, before the Word of God came to them; but

but when they had received it, they became *examples* to all that did beleive, in *Macedonia* and *Achaia*, 1 *Theſſ.* 1. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

God the Father, and *Jeſus Chriſt* his Son, are for having things ſeen, for having the Word of Life held forth. They light not a Candle that it might be put under a Buſhel, or under a Bed, but on a Candleſtick, that all that come in may ſee the light, *Matt.* 5. 15. *Mar.* 4. 12. *Luk.* 8. 16. *chap.* 11. 33.

And I ſay, as I ſaid before, in whom is it like ſo to ſhine, as in the Souls of great ſinners?

When the *Jewiſh Phariſees* dallied with the Goſpel, *Chriſt* threatned to take it from them, and to give it to the barbarous *Heathens*, and *Idolaters*. Why ſo? For they, ſaith he, will bring forth the Fruits thereof in their ſeaſon. *Therefore I ſay unto you, The Kingdom of God ſhall be taken from you, and given to a Nation bringing forth the fruits thereof*, Mat. 21. 41, 43.

I have often marvelled at our Youth, and ſaid in my heart, What ſhould be the reaſon that they ſhould be ſo generally at this day debauched as they are! For they

they are now Profane to amazement: And ſometimes I have thought one thing, and ſometimes another: That is, why God ſhould ſuffer it ſo to be. At laſt I have thought of this: How if the God whoſe ways are paſt finding out, ſhould ſuffer it ſo to be now, that he might make of ſome of them the more glorious Saints hereafter. I know Sin is of the Devil, but it cannot work in the world without permiſſion: And if it happens to be as I have thought, it will not be the firſt time that God the Lord hath caught Satan in his own deſign. For my part, I believe that the time is at hand, that we ſhall ſee better Saints in the World, than has been ſeen in it this many a day. And this Vileneſs that at preſent does ſo much ſwallow up our Youth, is one cauſe of my thinking ſo: For out of them, for from among them, when God ſets to his Hand, as of old, you ſhall ſee what penitent ones, what trembling ones, and what admirers of Grace, will be found to profeſs the Goſpel, to the glory of God by Chriſt.

Alas! We are a company of worn-out Chriſtians, our *Moon* is in the *Wane*; we are much more black than white, more dark than light; we ſhine but a little;

little; Grace in the moſt of us, is decayed. But I ſay, when they of there *debauched* ones that are to be ſaved, ſhall be brought in; when theſe that look more like Devils than Men, ſhall be Converted to *Chriſt*, (and I believe ſeveral of them will) then will *Chriſt* be exalted, Grace adored, the Word prized, *Sions* Paths better trodden, and Men in the purſuite of their own Salvation, to the amazement of them that are left behind.

Juſt before *Chriſt* came into the Fleſh, the World was Degenerated as it is now; The generality of the Men in *Jeruſalem* were become either high and famous for Hypocriſe, or filthy baſe in their Lives. The Devil alſo was broke looſe in hideous manner, and had taken poſſeſſion of many: Yea, I believe that there was never Generation before nor ſince, that could produce ſo many poſſeſſed with Devils, deformed, lame, blind, and infected with monſtrous Diſeaſes, as that Generation could. But what was the reaſon thereof? I mean the reaſon from God? Why one (and we may ſum up more in that anſwer that *Chriſt* gave to his Diſciples concerning him that was

born

born Blind) was, that the Works of God might be made manifeſt in them, and that the Son of God might be glorified thereby, *Joh.* 9. 2, 3. *chap.* 11. 4.

Now if theſe Devils and Diſeaſes, as they poſſeſſed Men then, were to make way and work for an approaching *Chriſt* in Perſon, and for the declaring of his Power, why may we not think that now, even now alſo, he is ready to come by his Spirit in the Goſpel to heal many of the Debaucheries of our Age? I cannot believe that Grace will take them all, *for there are but few that are ſaved*: But yet it will take ſome, even ſome of the worſt of Men, and make Bleſſed ones of them. But O! how theſe *Ringleaders* in Vice, will then ſhine in Vertue! They will be the very Pillars in Churches, they will be as an Enſign in the Land; *The Lord their God ſhall ſave them in that day, as the Flock of his People, for they ſhall be as the Stones of a Crown, lift up as an Enſign upon the Land*, Zech. 9. 16. But who are theſe? Even Idolatrous *Ephraim*, and backſliding *Judah*, Ver. 13.

I know there is ground to fear, that the Iniquity of this Generation will be purſued with heavy Judgments: But that will not hinder what we have ſuppoſed:

poſed: God took him a glorious Church out of Bloody *Jeruſalem*, yea, out of the chief of the Sinners there, and left the reſt to be taken and ſpoiled, and ſold Thirty for a Penny, in the Nations where they were Captives. The Goſpel working glorioufly in a place, to the ſeizing upon many of the *ringleading* Sinners thereof, promiſeth no ſecurity to the reſt, but rather threatneth them with the heavieſt and ſmarteſt Judgements; as in the Inſtance now given, we have a full demonſtration; but in defending, the Lord will defend his People; and in ſaving, he will ſave his Inheritance.

Nor does this ſpeak any great comfort to a decayed and backſliding ſort of Chriſtians, for the next time God rides Poſt with his Goſpel, he will leave ſuch Chriſtians behind him. But I ſay, *Chriſt* is reſolved to ſet up his Light in the World; yea, he is delighted to ſee his Graces ſhine, and therefore he commands that his Goſpel ſhould to that end, be offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners; for by great Sins it ſhineth moſt: Therefore he ſaith, *Begin at Jeruſalem.*

Eighthly,

Eighthly, And laſtly, *Chriſt Jeſus* will have Mercy to be offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners, *For that by that means the Impenitent that are left behind, will be at the Judgment, the more left without excuſe.*

God's Word has two edges, it can cut back-ſtroke and fore-ſtroke. If it doth thee no good, it will do thee hurt; 'Tis the ſavour of Life unto Life to thoſe that receive it, but of Death unto Death to them that refuſe it, 2 *Cor.* 2. 15, 16. But this is not all, the tender of Grace to the biggeſt Sinners, in the *firſt place*, will not only leave the reſt, or thoſe that refuſe it, in a deplorable condition, but will alſo ſtop their mouths, and cut off all pretence to excuſe, at that day. *If I had not come and ſpoken unto them*, ſaith Chriſt, *they had not had Sin; but now they have no cloke for their ſin*, for their ſin of perſevering in Impenitence, *John* 15. 22.

But what did he ſpeak to them? Why even that which I have told you; to wit, That he has in ſpecial, a delight in ſaving the biggeſt Sinners. He ſpake this in the way of his Doctrine, he ſpake this in the way of his Practice, even to the pouring out of his laſt breath before them, *Luk.* 23. 34.

Now

Now ſince this is ſo, what can the Condemned at the Judgement ſay for themſelves, why Sentence of Death ſhould not be paſſed upon them? I ſay, what excuſe can they make for themſelves, when they ſhall be asked why they did not in the day of Salvation come to *Chriſt* to be ſaved? Will they have ground to ſay to the Lord, Thou waſt only for ſaving of little Sinners, and therefore becauſe they were great ones, they durſt not come unto him; Or that thou hadſt not compaſſion for the biggeſt Sinners, therefore I died in deſpair; will theſe be excuſes for them as the Caſe now ſtandeth with them? Is there not every where in God's Book a flat contradiction to this, in multitudes of Promiſes, of Invitations, of Examples, and the like? Alas, alas! there will then be there millions of *Souls* to confute this Plea; ready I ſay, to ſtand up and ſay, O! deceived World, *Heaven ſwarms with ſuch, as was, when they were in the World, to the full as bad as you.*

Now this will kill all plea or excuſe, why they ſhould not periſh in their ſins; yea, the Text ſays, they ſhall *ſee* them there; *There ſhall be weeping, when you ſhall ſee Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob, and*

and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of Heaven, and you your ſelves thruſt out. And they ſhall come from the Eaſt, and from the Weſt, and from the North, and from the South, and ſhall ſit down in the Kingdom of God, Luk. 13. 28, 29. Out of which company it is eaſie to pick ſuch, as ſometimes were as bad People as any now breathe on the face of the Earth. What think you of the firſt Man, by whoſe ſins there are millions now in Hell? And ſo I may ſay, what think you of ten thouſand more beſides?

But if the Word will not ſtifle and gagg them up, I ſpeake now for amplification ſake, the view of thoſe who are ſaved ſhall.

There comes an *Inceſtuous* Perſon to the Barr, and pleads that the bigneſs of his Sins was a barr to his receiving the Promiſe; But will not his mouth be ſtopt as to that, when *Lot* and the Inceſtuous *Corinthian* ſhall be ſet before him, *Gen.* 19. 33, 34, 35, 36, 1 *Cor.* 5. 1, 2.

There comes a Thief and ſays, *Lord! my ſin of Theft, I thought, was ſuch as could not be pardoned by thee!* But when he ſhall ſee the Thief that was ſaved on the Croſs, ſtand by, as clothed with beauteous Glory, what further can he be

able

able to object? Yea, the Lord will produce ten thousand of his Saints at his coming, who shall after this manner execute Judgment upon all, *and so convince all that are ungodly among them of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him*, Jude 15, 16. And these are hard speeches against him, To say that he was not able or willing to save Men, because of the greatness of their sins, or to say that they were discouraged by his Word from Repentance, because of the heinousness of their offences.

These things, I say, shall then be confuted; He comes with ten thousand of his Saints to confute them, and to stop their mouths from making objections against their own eternal damnation.

Here is *Adam* the destroyer of the World; here is *Lot* that *lay with both his Daughters*; here is *Abraham* that was sometimes an *Idolater*, and *Jacob* that was a *Supplanter*, and *Ruben* that *lay with his Fathers Concubine*, and *Judah* that *lay with his Daughter-in-Law*, and *Levi* and *Simeon* that *wickedly slew the Sechemites*; and *Aaron* that made an Idol to be Worshipped, and that proclaimed a Religious Feast unto it. Here is also *Rahab* the

the Harlot, and *Bathsheba* that bare a Bastard to *David*. Here is *Solomon* that great Backslider, and *Manasseth* that man of Blood, and a Witch. Time would fail to tell you of the Woman of *Canaans* Daughter, of *Mary Magdalen*, of *Matthew* the Publican, and of *Gideon* and *Sampson*, and many thousands more.

Alas, alas! I say, what will these Sinners do, that have, through their unbelief, eclipsed the glorious largeness of the mercy of God, and gave way to despair of Salvation because of the bigness of their sins!

For all these, though now glorious Saints in Light, were sometimes Sinners of the biggest size, who had sins that were of a notorious hue; Yet now, I say, they are in their shining and heavenly Robes before the Throne of God and of the Lamb, Blessing for ever and ever, that Son of God for their Salvation, who dyed for them upon the Tree; admiring that ever it should come into their Hearts once to think of coming to God by Christ: But above all, blessing God for granting of them light to see those incouragements is his Testament; without which, without doubt, they had been

been daunted and ſunk down under guilt of Sin and Deſpair, as their fellow ſinners have done.

But now they alſo are all Witneſſes for God, and for his Grace, againſt an unbelieving World; for as I ſaid they ſhall come to *convince* the World of their Speeches, their hard and unbelieving words, that they have ſpoken concerning the mercy of God, and the merits of the Paſſion of his bleſſed Son *Jeſus Chriſt*.

But will it not, think you, ſtrangely put to ſilence all ſuch thoughts, and words, and reaſonings of the Ungodly before the Barr of God? doubtleſs it will; yea, and will ſend them away from his preſence alſo, with the greateſt guilt that poſſibly can faſten upon the Conſciences of Men.

For what will ſting like this? I have through mine own Fooliſh, narrow, unworthy, under-valuing thoughts of the love and ability of *Chriſt* to ſave me, brought my ſelf to everlaſting ruine. 'Tis true, I was a horrible ſinner, not one in a hundred did live ſo vile a life as I, but this ſhould not have kept me from cloſing with *Jeſus Chriſt*: I ſee now that there are abundance in Glory that once were

were as bad as I have been; but they were ſaved by Faith, and I am damned by Unbelief.

Wretch that I am! why did not I give glory to the Redeeming Blood of *Jeſus*? Why did I not humbly caſt my Soul at his bleſſed foot-ſtool for Mercy? Why did I judge of his ability to ſave me by the voice of my ſhallow reaſon, and the voice of a guilty Conſcience? Why betook not I my ſelf to the holy Word of God? Why did I not read and pray that I might underſtand, ſince now I perceive that God ſaid then *He giveth liberally to them that pray, and upbraideth not* Jam. 1. 5.

'Tis rational to think, that by ſuch Cogitations as theſe, the unbelieving World will be torn in pieces before the Judgment of *Chriſt*: Eſpecially thoſe that have lived where they *did* or *might* have heard the Goſpel of the Grace of God. Oh! that ſaying, *It ſhall be more tolerable for Sodom at the Judgment, than for them*, will be better underſtood. See *Luke* 10. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

This Reaſon therefore ſtandeth faſt; Namely, That *Chriſt*, by offering mercy in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners,

ners now, *will ſtop all mouths of the impenitent at the day of Judgement*, and cut off all excuſe that ſhall be attempted to be made (from the thoughts of the greatneſs of their Sins) why they came not to him.

I have often thought of the day of Judgment, and how God will deal with ſinners at that day: And I believe it will be managed with that ſweetneſs, with that equitableneſs, with that excellent Righteouſneſs, as to every ſin, and circumſtance, and aggravation thereof, that men that are damned, before the Judgment is over, ſhall receive ſuch conviction of the righteous Judgment of God upon them, and of their deſerts of Hell fire, that they ſhall in themſelves conclude that there is all the reaſon in the world that they ſhould be ſhut out of Heaven, and go to Hell-fire; *Theſe ſhall go away into everlaſting fire*, Matt. 25. 46.

Only this will tear, That they have miſt of Mercy and Glory, and obtained everlaſting damnation through their unbelief. But it will tear but *themſelves*, but their *own* Souls; they will gnaſh upon *themſelves*: For in that Mercy was offered to the chief of them in the *firſt* *place*,

place, and yet they were damned for rejecting of it: They were damned for forſaking what they had a propriety in; for, forſaking their *Own* Mercy.

And thus much for the Reaſons, I will conclude with a word of Application.

The APPLICATION.

F*Irſt*, Would *Jeſus Chriſt* have Mercy offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt ſinners? *Then this ſhews us how to make a right judgment of the heart of Chriſt to Men.* Indeed we have advantage to gueſs at the goodneſs of his Heart, by many things; as by his taking our nature upon him, his dying for us, his ſending his Word and Miniſters to us; and all that we might be ſaved. But this of *beginning to offer mercy to Jeruſalem*, is that which heightens all the reſt; for this doth not only confirm to us, that Love was the cauſe of his dying for us, but it ſhews us yet more the depth of that Love: He might have dyed for us, and yet have extended the benefit of his death to a few, as one might call them, of the beſt-conditioned-ſinners,

ners, to thoſe who (thought they were weak, and ſo could not but ſin) yet made not a trade of ſinning; To thoſe that ſinned not laviſhingly. There are in the World, as one may call them, the moderate Sinners; the Sinners that mix Righteouſneſs with their Pollutions; the ſinners that, though they be ſinners, do what on their part lies, (ſome that are blind would think ſo) that they might be ſaved. I ſay, it had been Love, great Love, if he had dyed for none but ſuch, and ſent his love to ſuch: But that he ſhould ſend out *conditions of Peace* to the biggeſt of Sinners! yea, that they ſhould be offered to them firſt of all! (for ſo he means when he ſays, *Begin at* Jeruſalem) This is wonderful! this ſhows his heart to purpoſe, as alſo the heart of God his Father who ſent him to do thus.

There is nothing more incident to Men that are awake in their Souls, than to have wrong thoughts of God; Thoughts that are narrow, and that pinch and pen up his Mercy to ſcanty and beggarily concluſions, and ridged legal conditions; ſuppoſing that it is rude and an intrenching upon his Majeſty, to come our ſelves, or to invite

others, until we have ſcraped and waſhed, and rubbed off as much of our dirt from us as we think is convenient, to make us ſomewhat orderly and handſome in his ſight. Such never knew what theſe Words meant, *Begin at Jeruſalem.* Yea, ſuch in their hearts have compared the Father and his Son to niggardly rich Men, whoſe Money comes from them like drops of blood. True, ſays ſuch, God has Mercy, but he is loth to part with it. You muſt pleaſe him well, if you get any from him: He is not ſo free as many ſuppoſe, nor is he ſo willing to ſave as ſome pretended Goſpellers imagine: But I ask ſuch, If the Father and Son be not unſpeakably free to ſhew Mercy, why was *this* Clauſe put into our Commiſſion to preach the Goſpel? Yea, why did he ſay, *Begin at Jeruſalem?* For when men, through the weakneſs of their wits, have attempted to ſhew other reaſons why *they* ſhould have the firſt proffer of Mercy, yet I can prove (by many undeniable Reaſons) that they of *Jeruſalem* (to whom the Apoſtles made the *firſt* offer, according as they were commanded) were the biggeſt Sinners that ever did breath upon the face of God's

God's earth (ſet the unpardonable ſin aſide) upon which my Doctrine ſtands like a Rock, That *Jeſus* the Son of God would have Mercy in the firſt place offered to the biggeſt Sinners: And if this doth not ſhew the heart of the Father and the Son to be infinitely free in beſtowing forgiveneſs of Sins, I confeſs my ſelf miſtaken.

Neither is there, ſet this aſide, another Argument like it, to ſhew us the willingneſs of *Chriſt* to ſave Sinners: For, as was ſaid before, all the reſt of the ſigns of *Chriſt*'s mercifulneſs might have been limitted to Sinners that are ſo and ſo qualified; but when he ſays, *Begin at Jeruſalem*, the Line is ſtretched out to the utmoſt, no man can imagine beyond it, and it is folly here to pinch and pare, to narrow, and ſeek to bring it within ſcanty bounds, for he plainly ſaith, *Begin at Jeruſalem.* The biggeſt Sinner, is the biggeſt Sinner; the *biggeſt* is the *Jeruſalem-ſinner.*

'Tis true, he ſaith that *Repentance and Remiſſion of ſins muſt go together*; but yet Remiſſion is ſent to the chief, the *Jeruſalem-ſinner*; nor doth Repentance leſſen at all the *Jeruſalem-ſinners crimes*, it diminiſheth none of his ſins, nor cauſes

that there ſhould be ſo much as half a one the fewer: It only puts a ſtop to the *Jeruſalem-ſinners* courſe, and makes him willing to be ſaved freely by Grace; and for time to come to be governed by that bleſſed Word that has brought the Tidings of good things to him.

Beſides, no man ſhews himſelf willing to be ſaved that repenteth not of his deeds, for he that goes on ſtill in his treſpaſſes, declares that he is reſolved to purſue his own damnation further.

Learn then to judge of the largeneſs of God's heart, and of the heart of his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*, by the Word: Judge not thereof by feeling, nor by the reports of thy Conſcience; Conſcience is oft-times here befooled, and made to go quite beſides the Word: 'Twas judging without the Word that made *David* ſay, *I am caſt off from God's eyes, and ſhall periſh one day by the hand of Saul*, Pſal. 31. 22. 1 Sam. 27. 1.

The Word had told him another thing; namely, that he ſhould be King in his ſtead. Our Text ſays alſo, that *Jeſus Chriſt* bids Preachers in their preaching Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins, *Begin firſt at Jeruſalem*: Thereby declaring

moſt

moſt truly, the infinite largeneſs of the merciful heart of God and his Son, to the ſinful Children of Men.

Judge thou, I ſay, therefore of the goodneſs of the heart of God and his Son, by this Text, and by other of the ſame import; ſo ſhalt thou not diſhonour the grace of God, nor needleſly fright thy ſelf, nor give away thy Faith, nor gratifie the Devil, nor loſe the benefit of his Word: I ſpeak now to weak Believers.

Secondly, Would *Jeſus Chriſt* have Mercy offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners, *to the Jeruſalem ſinners? Then, by this alſo, you muſt learn to judge of the ſufficiency of the merits of Chriſt*; not that the Merits of *Chriſt* can be *comprehended*, for that they are beyond the Conceptions of the whole World, being called *The unſearchable riches of Chriſt*; but yet they may be *apprehended* to a conſiderable degree. Now the way to apprehend them moſt, is to conſider what offers, after his Reſurrection, he makes of his Grace to Sinners; for to be ſure he will not offer beyond the vertue of his Merits; becauſe, as Grace is the cauſe of his Merits, ſo his Merits are the baſis and bounds, upon and by

which his Grace ſtands good, and is let out to Sinners. Doth he then command that his Mercy ſhould be offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners? It declares that there is a ſufficiency in his Blood to ſave the biggeſt Sinners. The Blood of *Jeſus Chriſt* cleanſeth from all Sin. And again, *Be it known unto you, Men and Brethren, That through this Man* (this Man's Merits) *is preached to you the forgiveneſs of Sins, and by him All that believe are juſtified from All things from which they could not be juſtified by the Law of Moſes*, Acts 13. 38.

Obſerve then thy Rule to make Judgement of the Sufficiency of the bleſſed Merits of thy Saviour; if he had not been able to have reconciled the biggeſt Sinners to his Father by his Blood, he would not have ſent to them; have ſent to them in the *firſt place* the Doctrine of Remiſſion of Sins; for Remiſſion of Sins is through Faith in his Blood: We are juſtified freely by the Grace of God, through the Redemption that is in the Blood of *Chriſt*. Upon the ſquare, as I may call it, of the worthineſs of the Blood of *Chriſt*, Grace acts, and offers Forgiveneſs of Sin to Men, *Epheſ.* 1. 7. *chap.* 2. 13, 14. *Coloſ.* 1. 20, 21, 22.

Hence

Hence therefore we muſt gather, That the Blood of *Chriſt* is of infinite value, for that he offereth Mercy to the biggeſt of Sinners: Nay further, ſince he offereth Mercy in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners; Conſidering alſo that this firſt act of his, is that which the World will take notice of, and expect it ſhould be continued unto the end; Alſo it is a diſparagement to a Man that ſeekes his own Glory in what he undertakes, to do that for a ſpurt, which he cannot continue and hold out in: This is our Lord's own Argument, *He began to build*, ſaith he, *but was not able to finiſh*, Luk. 14. 28, 29, 30.

Shouldeſt thou hear a Man ſay, I am reſolved to be kind to the Poor, and ſhould begin giving with handfuls of *Guinea's*, you would conclude that either he is wonderful rich, or muſt ſtraighten his hand, or will ſoon be at the bottom of his Riches. Why this is the Caſe, *Chriſt* at his Reſurrection gave it out that he would be good to the World; and firſt ſends to the biggeſt Sinners, with an intent to have Mercy on them. Now the biggeſt Sinners cannot be ſaved but by abundance of Grace, 'tis not a little that will ſave great Sinners, *Rom.* 5. 17.

And I ſay again, ſince the Lord *Jeſus* mounts thus high at the firſt, and ſends to the *Jeruſalem-ſinners*, that they may come firſt to partake of his Mercy; it follows that either he has unſearchable Riches of Grace and Worth in himſelf, or elſe he muſt ſtraighten his hand, or his Grace and Merits will be ſpent before the World's at an end. But let it be believed, as ſurely as ſpoken, he is ſtill as full as ever! He is not a jot the poorer for all the Forgiveneſſes that he has given away to great Sinners; Alſo he is ſtill as free as at firſt, for he never yet called back this Word, *Begin at the Jeruſalem-ſinners.* And as I ſaid, ſince his Grace is extended according to the worth of his Merits; I conclude, that there is the ſame vertue in his Merits to ſave now, as there was at the very beginning.

O the the Riches of the Grace of *Chriſt!* Oh the Riches of the Blood of *Chriſt!*

Thirdly, Would *Jeſus Chriſt* have Mercy offered in the firſt place to the biggeſt ſinners, *Then here is encouragement for you that think, for wicked hearts and lives, you have not your fellows in the World*; yet to come to him.

There

There is a People that therefore fear leſt they ſhould be rejected of *Jeſus Chriſt*, becauſe of the greatneſs of their ſins; whenas you ſee here, ſuch are ſent to, ſent to by *Jeſus Chriſt* to come to him for Mercy; *Begin at Jeruſalem*: Never did one thing anſwer another more fitly in this world, than this Text fitteth ſuch kind of ſinners. As Face anſwereth Face in a Glaſs, ſo this Text anſwereth the neceſſities of ſuch ſinners. What can a Man ſay more, but that he ſtands in the rank of the biggeſt ſinners? Let him ſtretch himſelf whether he can, and think of himſelf to the utmoſt, he can but conclude himſelf to be one of the biggeſt Sinners: And what then? Why the Text meets him in the very Face, and ſaith, *Chriſt* offereth Mercy to the biggeſt Sinners, to the very *Jeruſalem-Sinners*. What more can be objected? Nay, he doth not only offer to ſuch his Mercy, but to them 'tis commanded to be offered in *the firſt place*; *Begin at Jeruſalem*. Preach Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins among all Nations, *beginning at Jeruſalem*. Is not here incouragement for thoſe that think, *for wicked Hearts and Lives, they have not their fellows in the World?*

Objection. *But I have a Heart as hard as a Rock.*

Anſwer. Well, but this doth but prove thee a biggeſt ſinner.

Object. *But my Heart continually frets againſt the Lord.*

Anſw. Well, this doth but prove thee a biggeſt ſinner.

Object. *But I have been deſperate in ſinful courſes.*

Anſw. Well, ſtand thou with the number of the biggeſt ſinners.

Object. *But my grey Head is found in the way of wickedneſs.*

Anſw. Well thou art in the rank of the biggeſt ſinners.

Object. *But I have not only a baſe Heart, but I have lived a debauched life.*

Anſ. Stand thou alſo among thoſe that are called the biggeſt ſinners. And what then? Why the Text *ſwoops* you all; you cannot object your ſelves beyond the Text: It has a particular meſſage to the *biggeſt ſinner.* I ſay, it *ſwoops* you all.

Object. *But I am a Reprobate.*

Anſ. Now thou talkeſt like a fool, and medleſt with what thou underſtandeſt not: No ſin, but *the ſin of final Impenitence*, can prove a Man a Reprobate. And I am ſure thou haſt not arrived as yet

yet unto that: Therefore thou underſtandeſt not what thou ſayeſt, and makeſt groundleſs concluſions againſt thy ſelf. Say thou art a Sinner, and I will hold with thee. Say thou art a great ſinner, and I will ſay ſo too. Yea, ſay thou art one of the biggeſt ſinners, and ſpare not; for the Text yet is beyond thee, is yet betwixt Hell and thee; *Begin at Jeruſalem*, has yet a ſmile upon thee: And thou talkeſt as if thou waſt a Reprobate, and that the greatneſs of thy ſins do prove thee ſo to be; when yet they of *Jeruſalem* were not ſuch, whoſe ſins I dare ſay, were ſuch, both for bigneſs and heinouſneſs, as thou art not capable of committing beyond them; unleſs now after thou haſt received Conviction that the Lord *Jeſus* is the only Savior of the World, thou ſhouldeſt wickedly and deſpightfully turn thy ſelf from him, and conclude he is not to be truſted to for Life, and ſo crucifie him afreſh. This I muſt confeſs a Cheat a- Man under the *Black Rod* will bring a danger of eternal Damnation, and ſet him in *chap.* 10. 29. This i ation, *Heb.* 6. 6 foot the Son of God s trampling under Blood an unholy t , and counting hi *Jeruſalem*, but they ing. *This did they* did it ignorantly Unbe-

Unbelief, and ſo were yet capable of Mercy: But to do this againſt profeſſed Light, and to ſtand to it, puts a man beyond the Text indeed, *Act.* 3. 14, 15, 16, 17. 1 *Tim.* 1. 13.

But I ſay, what is this to him that would fain be ſaved by *Chriſt*? His ſins did, as to greatneſs, never yet reach to the nature of the ſins that the ſinners intended by the Text, had made themſelves guilty of. He that would be ſaved by Chriſt, has an honourable eſteem of him, but they of *Jeruſalem* preferred a Murderer before him; but as for him, they cried, Away, away with him, 'tis not fit that he ſhould live. Perhaps thou wilt object, *That thy ſelf haſt a thouſand times preferred a ſtinking Luſt before him.* I anſwer, Be it ſo, it is but what is common to Men to do; nor doth the Lord *Jeſus* make ſuch a fooliſh Life a *Barr* to thee, to forbid thy coming to him, or a *Bond* to his Grace, that it might be kept from thee; but admits of thy Repentance, and offereth himſelf unto thee freely, as thou ſtandeſt among the *Jeruſalem-ſinners.*

Take therefore incouragement, Man; Mercy is, by the Text, held forth to the biggeſt ſinners. Yea, put thy ſelf into

the

the number of the worſt, by reckoning that thou mayeſt be one of the firſt, and mayeſt not be put off till the biggeſt ſinners are ſerved: For the biggeſt ſinners are firſt *invited*; conſequently, if they come, they are like to be the firſt that ſhall be *ſerved*. 'Twas ſo with *Jeruſalem*; *Jeruſalem-ſinners* were they that were firſt, *invited*, and thoſe of them that came firſt, (and there came three thouſand of them the firſt day they were invited, how many came afterwards, none can tell) *they were firſt ſerved*

Put in thy Name, Man, among the *biggeſt*, leſt thou art made to wait till *they are ſerved*. You have ſome men that think themſelves very cunning, becauſe they put up their Names in their Prayers among them that feign it, ſaying, *God, I thank thee, I am not ſo bad as the worſt*; but believe it, if they be ſaved at all, they ſhall be ſaved in the laſt place. The firſt in their own eyes ſhall be *ſerved* laſt, and the laſt, or worſt, ſhall be firſt. The Text inſinuates it, *Begin at Jeruſalem*; and Reaſon backs it, for they have moſt need. Behold ye therefore, how God's ways are above ours; we are for *ſerving* the worſt laſt, God is for *ſerving* the worſt firſt. The Man at the Pool,

that

that to my thinking was longeſt in his Diſeaſe, and moſt helpleſs as to his Cure, was firſt healed, yea, he only was healed; for we read that *Chriſt* healed him, but we read not then that he healed one more there, *Joh.* 5. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

Wherefore if thou wouldſt ſooneſt be *ſerved*, put in thy Name among the very worſt of ſinners. Say, when thou art upon thy knees, Lord! *here is a Jeruſalem-ſinner!* a ſinner of the biggeſt ſize! one whoſe burden is of the greateſt bulk and heavieſt weight! one that cannot ſtand long without ſinking into Hell, without thy ſupporting hand! *Be not thou far from me, O Lord: O my ſtrength, haſte thou to help me.*

I ſay, put in thy Name with *Magdalen*, with *Manaſſeh*, that thou mayeſt fare as the *Magdalen* and the *Manaſſeh-ſinners* do. The Man in the Goſpel made the deſperate condition of his Child, an argument with *Chriſt* to haſten his Cure: *Sir, Come down*, ſaith he, *ere my Child die*, Joh. 4. 49. And *Chriſt* regarded his haſte, ſaying, *Go thy way, thy Son liveth*, Ver. 50. *Haſte* requires *haſte*. *David* was for ſpeed; Deliver me ſpeedily; hear me ſpeedily, anſwer me ſpeedily, *Pſal.* 31. 2. *Pſal.* 69. 17. *Pſal.* 102. 2.

But

But why ſpeedily? I am in the *Net*, I am in *trouble*, my days *conſume* like ſmoke, *Pſal.* 31. 4. *Pſal.* 69. 17. *Pſal.* 102. 3. Deep calleth unto deep, neceſſity calls for *help*; *great* neceſſity for *preſent* help.

Wherefore I ſay, be ruled by me in this matter; feign not thy ſelf another Man, if *thou haſt been a filthy ſinner*, but go *in thy colours* to *Jeſus Chriſt*, and put thy ſelf among the moſt Vile, and let him alone to *put thee among the Children*, *Jer.* 3. 19. Confeſs all that thou knoweſt of thy ſelf; I know thou wilt find it hard work to do thus; eſpecially if thy mind be legal; but do it, *leſt thou ſtay*, and be *deferred* with the little ſinners, *until the great ones have had their alms.* What do you think *David* intended when he ſaid, his Wounds ſtunk and were corrupted, *but to haſten God to have mercy upon him, and not to defer his Cure. Lord*, ſaies he, *I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly, I go mourning all the day long. I am feeble, and ſore broken by reaſon of the diſquietment of my heart*, Pſal. 38. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

David knew what he did by all this, he knew that his making the worſt of his Caſe, was the way to ſpeedy help, and that

that a feigning and diſſembling the matter with God, was the next way to a demurr, as to his Forgiveneſs.

I have one thing more to offer for thy encouragement who *deemeſt* thy ſelf one of the biggeſt ſinners; And that is, Thou art as it were, called by thy Name, in the *firſt place* to come in for Mercy. Thou *Man of Jeruſalem*, hearken to thy Call; Men do ſo in Courts of Judicature, and preſently cry out, *Here, Sir*; and then they ſhoulder and croud, and ſay, Pray give way, I am called into the Court. Why, this is thy Caſe, thou great, thou *Jeruſalem-ſinner*; be of good chear, he calleth thee, *Mark* 10. 46, 47, 48, 49. Why ſitteſt thou ſtill? Ariſe; why ſtandeſt thou ſtill? Come, Man. Thy *Call* ſhould give thee *authority* to come. *Begin at Jeruſalem*, is thy call and authority to come. Wherefore up, and ſhoulder it, Man: Say, *Stand away Devil, Chriſt* calls me; *ſtand away Unbelief*, Chriſt calls me: Stand away all ye my diſcouraging Apprehenſions, for my Saviour calls me to him to receive of his Mercy. Men will do thus, as I ſaid, in Courts below; and why ſhouldſt not thou approach thus to the Court above. The *Jeruſalem-ſinner* is firſt in *Thought*, firſt in *Commiſſion*, firſt

firſt in the *Record* of Names, and therefore ſhould give attendance with expectation, that he is firſt to recive Mercy of God.

Is not this an incouragement to the biggeſt ſinners to make their Application to *Chriſt* for Mercy? *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden*, doth alſo confirm this thing, that is, that the *biggeſt ſinner*, and he that has the biggeſt burden, is he who is firſt invited. *Chriſt pointeth over the Heads of thouſands*, as he ſits on the Throne of Grace, directly to ſuch a Man; and ſays, Bring in hither the *maimed*, the *halt*, and the *blind*; Let the *Jeruſalem-ſinner* that ſtands there behind, come to me. Wherefore ſince *Chriſt* ſays Come, to thee, let the Angels make a *lane*, and let all Men give place, that the *Jeruſalem-ſinner* may come to *Jeſus Chriſt* for Mercy.

Fourthly, Would *Jeſus Chriſt* have Mercy offered in the firſt place to the biggeſt ſinners? *Then come thou Profane Wretch, and let me a little enter an argument with thee*; Why wilt thou not come to Jeſus Chriſt, ſince thou art a *Jeruſalem-ſinner*? How canſt thou find in thy heart to ſet thy ſelf againſt Grace, againſt ſuch Grace as offereth Mercy to thee?

What

What Spirit poſſeſſeth thee, and holds thee back from a ſincere cloſure with thy Saviour? Behold God groaningly complains of thee, ſaying, *But Iſrael would none of me. When I called, none did anſwer.* Pſal. 81. 11. Iſa. 66. 4.

Shall God enter this Complaint againſt thee? Why doſt thou put him off? why doſt thou ſtop thine ear? Canſt thou defend thy ſelf? When thou art called to an account for thy neglects of ſo great Salvation, what canſt thou anſwer? Or doeſt thou think thou ſhalt eſcape the Judgment? *Heb.* 2. 3.

No more *ſuch* Chriſts! There will be no more ſuch Chriſts, ſinner! Oh! put not the day, the day of Grace, away from thee! If it be once gone, 'twill never come again, Sinner.

But what is it that has got thy Heart; and that keeps it from thy Saviour? *Who in the Heavens can be compared unto the Lord? Who among the Sons of the Mighty can be likened unto the Lord?* Pſal. 89. 6. Haſt thou, thinkeſt thou, found any thing ſo good as Jeſus Chriſt? Is there any among thy Sins, thy Companions, and fooliſh Delights, that like *Chriſt*, can help thee in the day of thy diſtreſs? Behold, the greatneſs of thy ſins

ſins cannot hinder; let not the ſtubbornneſs of thy Heart hinder thee, Sinner.

Objection, *I am aſhamed.*

Anſwer, Oh! don't be aſhamed to be ſaved, Sinner.

Object. *But my Old Companions will mock me.*

Anſ. Oh! don't be mocked out of Eternal Life, Sinner.

Thy ſtubbornneſs affects, afflicts the Heart of thy Saviour. Careſt thou not for this? Of old, *He beheld the City, and wept over it.* Canſt thou hear this, and not be concerned? *Luke* 19. 41, 42. Shall Chriſt weep to ſee thy Soul going on to deſtruction, and wilt thou ſport thy ſelf in *That* way? Yea, ſhall Chriſt, that can be eternally Happy without thee, be more afflicted at the thoughts of the loſs of thy Soul, than thy ſelf, who art certainly eternally miſerable if thou neglecteſt to come to him?

Theſe things that keep thee and thy Saviour, on thy part, aſunder, are but Bubbles; the leaſt prick of an affliction, will let out, as to thee, what now thou thinkeſt is worth the venture of Heaven to enjoy.

Haſt thou not *Reaſon?* Canſt thou not ſo much as once ſoberly think of thy dying

ing hour? or of whither thy ſinful life will drive thee then? Haſt thou no *Conſcience*? or having one, is it rocked ſo faſt aſleep by Sin, or made ſo weary with an unſucceſsful calling upon thee, that it is laid down, and cares for thee no more? Poor Man, thy ſtate is to be lamented. Haſt no *Judgment*? Art not able to conclude, that to be ſaved, is better than to burn in Hell; and that Eternal Life, with God's favour, is better than a Temporal Life in God's diſpleaſure? Haſt no affection but what is bruitiſh? what, none at all? No affection for the God that made thee? What, none for his loving Son that has ſhewed his love, and dyed for thee? Is not Heaven worth thy affection? O poor Man! which is ſtrongeſt, think'ſt thou, God or thee? If thou art not able to overcome him, thou art a fool for ſtanding out againſt him; Mat. 5. 25, 26. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.* He will gripe hard, his Fiſt is ſtronger than a Lions Paw; take heed of him, he will be angry if you deſpiſe his Son; and will you ſtand guilty in your Treſpaſſes, when he offereth you his Grace and Favour? *Exod.* 34. 6, 7. *Heb.* 10. 29, 30, 31.

Now

Now we come to the Text, *Beginning at Jeruſalem.* This Text, though it be *now* one of the brighteſt Stars that ſhineth in the Bible, becauſe there is in it, as full, if not the fulleſt offer of Grace that can be imagined, to the Sons of Men; yet to them that ſhall periſh from under *this* Word, even this Text will be to ſuch, *one of the hotteſt Coals in Hell.*

This Text therefore will *ſave* thee, or *ſink* thee; there is no ſhifting of it: If it ſaves thee, it will ſet thee high; if it ſinks thee, it will ſet thee low.

But, I ſay, Why ſo unconcerned? Haſt no Soul? Or doſt think thou mayeſt loſe thy *Soul*, and ſave thy *ſelf?* Is it not pity, had it otherwiſe been the Will of God, that ever thou waſt made a Man, for that thou ſetteſt ſo little by thy Soul?

Sinner, Take the Invitation; Thou art called upon to come to Chriſt: Nor art thou called upon but by order from the Son of God, though thou ſhouldeſt happen to come of the biggeſt ſinners: For he has bid us offer *Mercy*, as to all the World in general, ſo in the firſt place, *To the Sinners of Jeruſalem*; or to the biggeſt ſinners.

Fifthly, Would Jeſus Chriſt have Mercy

cy offered in the *first place* to the biggeſt ſinners? *Then this ſhews how unreaſonable a thing it is, for men to deſpair of Mercy.* For thoſe that preſume, I ſhall ſay ſomething to them afterward.

I now ſpeak to them that Deſpair.

There are four ſorts of Deſpair. There is the deſpair of Devils; There is the deſpair of Souls in Hell; There is the deſpair that is grounded upon Mens Deficiency; And there is the deſpair that they are perplexed with that are willing to be ſaved, but are too ſtrongly born down with the burden of their ſins.

The deſpair of Devils, the Damned's deſpair, and that deſpair that a Man has of attaining of Life, becauſe of his own Deficiency, are all reaſonable. Why ſhould not Devils and Damned Souls deſpair? Yea, why ſhould not Man deſpair of getting to Heaven by his own abilities? I therefore am concerned only with the fourth ſort of Deſpair, to wit, with *the deſpair of thoſe that would be ſaved, but are too ſtrongly born down with the burden of their ſins.*

I ſay therefore to thee that art thus, *And why Deſpair?* Thy deſpair, if it was reaſonable, ſhould flow from thee, becauſe found in the Land that is beyond the Grave;

Grave; or becauſe thou certainly knowſt that *Chriſt* will not, or cannot ſave thee.

But for the firſt, thou art yet in the Land of the Living; and for the ſecond, thou haſt ground to believe the quite *contrary*: *Chriſt* is able to ſave to the uttermoſt, them that come to God by him; and if he were not willing, he would not have commanded that Mercy in the *firſt place* ſhould be offered to the *biggeſt ſinners*. Beſides he hath ſaid, *And let him that is athirſt come, and whoſoever will, let him take the Water of Life Freely*; that is, with all my heart. What ground now is here for Deſpair? If thou ſayeſt, *The number and burden of my ſins.* I anſwer, Nay: That is rather a ground for Faith; becauſe ſuch an one above all others, is invited by Chriſt to come unto him, yea, promiſed Reſt and Forgiveneſs if they come, *Matt.* 11. 28. What ground then to deſpair? Verily none at all. Thy deſpair then is a thing unreaſonable, and without footing in the Word.

But I have no experience of God's love; God has given me no comfort, or ground of hope, though I have waited upon him for it many a day.

Thou

Thou haſt experience of God's love, for that he has opened thine eyes to ſee thy ſins; and for that he has given thee deſires to be ſaved by Jeſus Chriſt. For by thy ſenſe of Sin thou art made to ſee thy poverty of Spirit, and that has laid thee under a ſure ground to hope that Heaven ſhall be thine hereafter.

Alſo thy deſires to be ſaved by *Chriſt*, has put thee under another Promiſe, ſo there is two to hold thee up in hope; though thy preſent burden be never ſo heavy, *Matt.* 5. 3, 6. As for what thou ſayeſt, as to God's ſilence to thee, perhaps he has ſpoken to thee once or twice already, but thou haſt not perceived it, *Job.* 33. 14, 15.

However thou haſt *Chriſt* Crucified, ſet forth before thine eyes in the Bible, and an invitation to come unto him, though thou be a *Jeruſalem-ſinner*, tho thou be a biggeſt Sinner; and ſo no ground to deſpair. What if God will be ſilent to thee, is that ground of deſpair? Not at all, ſo long as there is a promiſe in the Bible that God will in no wiſe caſt away the coming ſinner, and *ſo* long as he invites the *Jeruſalem-ſinner* to come unto him, *Joh.* 6. 37.

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Build not therefore Deſpair upon theſe things, they are no ſufficient foundation for it, ſuch plenty of Promiſes being in the Bible; and ſuch a diſcovery of his Mercy to great ſinners of old, eſpecially ſince we have withal a Clauſe in the Commiſſion given to Miniſters to Preach, that they ſhould begin with the *Jeruſalem-ſinners* in their offering of Mercy to the World.

Beſides, God ſays, *They that wait upon the Lord, ſhall renew their ſtrength, they ſhall mount up with wings like Eagles*; but perhaps it may be long firſt, *I waited long*, ſaith *David*, *and did ſeek the Lord*, and at length his cry was heard: Wherefore he bid his Soul wait on God, and ſays, for it is good ſo to do before thy Saints, *Pſal.* 40. 1. *Pſal.* 62. 5. *Pſal.* 52. 9.

And what if thou waiteſt upon God all thy days? Is it below thee? And what if God will croſs his Book and blot out the hand-writing that is againſt thee, and not let thee know it as yet? Is it fit to ſay unto God, *Thou art hard hearted?* Deſpair not. Thou haſt no ground to deſpair, ſo long as thou liveſt in this World. 'Tis a ſin to begin to deſpair, before one ſets his foot over the threſhold

of Hell-gates. For them that are there, let them *deſpair* and ſpare not; but as for thee, thou haſt no ground to do it. What! Deſpair of Bread, in a Land that is full of Corn! Deſpair of Mercy when our God is full of Mercy! Deſpair of Mercy, when God goes about by his Miniſters, beſeeching of Sinners to be reconciled unto him! 2 *Cor.* 5. 18, 19, 20.

Thou *ſcrupulous* fool, where canſt thou find that God was ever falſe to his Promiſe, or that he ever deceived the Soul that ventured it ſelf upon him? He often calls upon Sinners to truſt him, though they walk in darkneſs and have no light, *Iſa.* 50. 10.

They have his Promiſe and Oath for their Salvation, that flee for refuge to the hope ſet before them, *Heb.* 6. 17, 18.

Deſpair! When we have a God of Mercy, and a Redeeming Chriſt *Alive*! For ſhame forbear: Let them deſpair that dwell where there is no God, and that are confined to thoſe Chambers of Death, which can be reached by no Redemption.

A Living Man deſpair! When he is *chid* for murmuring and complaining! *Lam.* 3. 39. Oh! ſo long as we are where Promiſes *ſwarm*, where Mercy is *proclaimed*,

proclaimed, where Grace *reigns*, and where *Jeruſalem-ſinners* are priviledged with the firſt offer of Mercy, *it is a baſe thing to deſpair!*

Deſpair undervalues the Promiſe, undervalues the Invitation, undervalues the proffer of Grace. *Deſpair* undervalues the ability of God the Father, and the redeeming Blood of Chriſt his Son: Oh unreaſonable *Deſpair!*

Deſpair makes Man *God's* Judge; 'tis a Controller of the Promiſe, a Contradicter of Chriſt in his large offers of Mercy: And one that undertakes to make *Unbelief* the great manager of our Reaſon and Judgment, in determining about what God can and will do for Sinners.

Deſpair! It is the Devils fellow, the Devils maſter; yea, the Chains with which he is captivated and held under darkneſs for ever: And to give way thereto in a Land, in a State and Time that flows with Milk and Honey, is an uncomely thing.

I would ſay to my Soul; O my Soul! *this* is not the place of Deſpair, *this* is not the *time* to deſpair in: As long as mine eyes can find a Promiſe in the Bible;

as long as there is the leaſt mention of Grace, as long as there is a moment left me of Breath or Life in this World; ſo long will I wait or look for Mercy; ſo long will I fight againſt Unbelief and Deſpair.

This is the way to honour God and Chriſt: this is the way to ſet the Crown on the Promiſe; this is the way to welcome the Invitation, and Inviter; and this is the way to thruſt thy ſelf under the ſhelter and protection of the word of Grace. Never deſpair ſo long as our Text is alive, for that doth ſound it out, *That Mercy by Chriſt is offered in the firſt place to the biggeſt ſinner.*

Deſpair is an unprofitable thing, 'twill make a man weary of *waiting* upon God, 2 *King.* 6. 33. 'Twill make a man *forſake* God, and *ſeek* his Heaven in the *good things of this world*, Gen. 4. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17. 'Twill make a man his *own* tormenter, and flounce and fling *like a wild Bull in a net*, *Iſa.* 51. 20.

Deſpair! It drives a man to the ſtudy of his own ruin, and brings him at laſt to be his own Executioner, 2 *Sam.* 17. 23. *Matt.* 27. 3, 4, 5.

Beſides, I am perſwaded alſo, that Deſpair is the cauſe there are ſo ma-

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ny that would fain be Atheiſts in the World: For becauſe they have entertained a Conceit that God will never be merciful to them; therefore they labour to perſwade themſelves that there is no God at all, as if their misbelief would kill God, or cauſe him to ceaſe to be. A poor ſhift for an Immortal Soul, for a Soul who liketh not to retain God in its knowledge! If this be the beſt that Deſpair can do, let it go, Man; and betake thy ſelf to Faith, to Prayer, to wait for God, and to hope in deſpight of ten thouſand doubts. And for thy encouragement, take yet (as an addition to what has already been ſaid) theſe following Scriptures; *The Lord takes pleaſure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy*, Pſal. 147. 11.

Whence note, They *fear not* God, that *hope not* in his mercy. Alſo, God is angry with them that hope not in his Mercy; for he only taketh pleaſure in them that hope. He that believeth, or hath received his Teſtimony, *hath ſet to his Seal that God is true*, Joh. 3. 33. But he that receiveth it not, hath made him a liar, and that is a very unworthy thing, 1 Joh. 5. 10, 11. *Let the Wicked forſake his ways, and the Unrighteous man his*

thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly multiply pardons. Iſa. 55. 7. Perhaps thou art weary of thy ways, but art not weary of thy thoughts; of thy unbelieving and deſpairing thoughts: Now God alſo would have thee caſt away theſe thoughts, as ſuch which he deſerveth not at thy hands, *for he will have mercy upon thee, and he will abundantly pardon.*

O fools! and ſlow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have ſpoken, Luk. 24. 25. Mark you here, *ſlowneſs* to believe *is a piece of folly.* Ay! but ſayeſt thou, I do believe *ſome*, and I believe what can make againſt me. Ay, but Sinner, Chriſt Jeſus here calls thee fool for not believing *All.* Believe *All, and deſpair if thou canſt.* He that believes *All*, believes that Text that ſaith, *Chriſt* would have Mercy Preached firſt to the *Jeruſalem-ſinners.* He that believeth *All*, believeth all the Promiſes and Conſolations of the Word; and the Promiſes and Conſolations of the Word, weigh heavier than do all the Curſes and Threatnings of the Law. And Mercy *rejoyceth againſt Judgment.* Wherefore believe *All*, and Mercy will to thy Conſcience, weigh Judgment down, and

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ſo miniſter Comfort to thy Soul. The Lord take the Yoke from off thy Jaws, ſince he has ſet Meat before thee, *Hoſ.* 11. 4. And help thee to remember that he is pleaſed in the firſt place to offer Mercy to the biggeſt ſinners.

Sixthly, Since Jeſus Chriſt would have Mercy offered in the firſt place to the biggeſt ſinners, *Let Souls ſee that they lay right hold thereof*; leaſt they notwithſtanding, indeed come ſhort thereof. *Faith* only knows how to deal with Mercy; wherefore put not in the place thereof *Preſumption*. I have obſerved, that as there are Herbs and Flowers in our Gardens, ſo there are their Counterfeits in the Feild; only they are diſtinguiſhed from the other by the Name of *Wild Ones*. Why, there is Faith, and *Wild Faith*; and *Wild Faith* is *this Preſumption?* I call it *Wild Faith*, becauſe God never placed it in his Garden, his Church; 'tis only to be found in the Field, the World. I alſo call it *Wild Faith*, becauſe it only grows up, and is nouriſhed where other *wild notions* abounds. Wherefore take heed of this, and all may be well: For this *preſumptuouſneſs* is a very heinous thing in the eyes of God: *The Soul*, ſaith he, *that ſhall do ought preſumptuouſly* (whe-

ther born in the Land or a ſtranger) *the ſame reproacheth the Lord*; *And that Soul ſhall be cut off from among his People*, Num. 15. 30.

The thoughts of this made *David* tremble, and pray, *That God would hold him back from preſumptuous ſins, and not ſuffer them to have dominion over him*, Pſal. 19. 13.

Now this Preſumption, *Then* puts it ſelf in the place of Faith, when it tampereth with the promiſe for Life, while the Soul is a ſtranger to Repentance. Wherefore you have in the Text, to prevent doing thus, both *Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins* to be offered to *Jeruſalem*, not Remiſſion without Repentance: For all that repent not ſhall periſh, let them preſume on Grace and the Promiſe while they will, *Luk.* 13. 1, 2, 3.

Preſumption then is that which ſevereth *Faith* and *Repentance*, concluding that the Soul ſhall be ſaved by Grace, though the man was never made ſorry for his ſins, nor the love of the Heart turned therefrom. This is to be *ſelf-willed*, as *Peter* has it. And this is a deſpiting the Word of the Lord, for that has put Repentance and Faith together, Mark. 1. 15. *And becauſe he hath deſpiſed the Word of the Lord and hath broken the Commandment, that Soul ſhall utterly be*

cut

cut off: his iniquities ſhall be upon him, Numb. 15. 13.

Let ſuch therefore look to it, who yet are, and abide in their ſins; for ſuch, if they hope, *as they are*, to be ſaved, preſume upon the grace of God. Wherefore Preſumption and not hearkning to God's Word, are put together, *Deut.* 17. 12.

Again, *Then* men preſume when they are reſolved to abide in their ſins, and yet expect to be ſaved by God's grace through *Chriſt*. This is as much as to ſay, God liketh of Sin as well as I do, and careth not how men live, if ſo be they lean upon his Son. Of this ſort are they that build up *Zion* with Blood, and *Jeruſalem* with Iniquity; *That judge for reward, and teach for hire, and Divine for money, and lean upon the Lord*, Mic. 3. 10, 11. This is doing things with an *high hand* againſt the Lord our God, and a taking him, as it were, *at the Catch!* This is, as we ſay among men, to ſeek to put a trick upon God, as if he had not ſufficiently fortified his Propoſals of Grace by his holy Word, againſt all *ſuch* kind of fools as theſe. But look to it.

Such will be found at the day of God, not among that great company of *Jeru-*

ſalem-ſinners, that ſhall be ſaved by Grace, but among thoſe that have been the great abuſers of the grace of God in the World. Theſe that ſay, *Let us ſin that Grace may abound, and let us do Evil that Good may come*, their Damnation is juſt. And if ſo, they are a great way off of that Salvation that is by Jeſus Chriſt preſented to the *Jeruſalem-ſinners*.

I have therefore theſe things to propound to that *Jeruſalem-ſinner* that would know, if he may be ſo bold to venture himſelf upon this Grace.

Firſt, Doſt thou ſee thy ſins?

Secondly, Art thou weary of them?

Thirdly, Wouldſt thou with all thy heart be ſaved by Jeſus Chriſt? I dare ſay no leſs, I dare ſay no more. But if it be truly thus with thee, how great ſoever thy ſins have been, how bad ſoever thou feeleſt thy heart, how far ſoever thou art from thinking that God, has mercy for thee; thou art the Man, the *Jeruſalem-ſinner*, that the Word of God has conquered, and to whom it offereth free Remiſſion of ſins, by the Redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt.

When the Jaylor cried out, *Sirs, What muſt I do to be ſaved?* The anſwer was, *Believe on the Lord* Jeſus Chriſt, *and thou*

ſhalt

ſhalt be ſaved. He that ſees his ſins aright, is brought to his wits-end by them, and he that is *ſo*, is willing to part from them, and to be ſaved by the grace of God.

If *this* be thy Caſe, fear not, give no way to Deſpair, thou *preſumeſt not*, if thou believeſt to life everlaſting in Jeſus Chriſt. Yea, Chriſt is prepared for ſuch as thou art.

Therefore take good courage and believe. The deſign of Satan is to tell the Preſumptuous, that their preſuming on Mercy *is good*; but to perſwade the Believer, that his believing *is impudent bold dealing with God.* I never heard a preſumptuous man in my life, ſay that he was afraid that he preſumed; but I have heard many an honeſt humble Soul ſay, that they have been afraid that their Faith has been Preſumption. Why ſhould Satan moleſt thoſe whoſe ways he knows will bring them to him? And who can think that he ſhould be quiet when men take the right courſe to eſcape his helliſh ſnares? This therefore is the reaſon why the truly humbled, is oppoſed, while the Preſumptuous goes one by *Wind* and *Tide*. The truly humble, Satan hates

hates, but he laughs to see the foolery of the other.

Does thy hand and heart tremble? Upon thee the Promise smiles; *To this man will I look*, says God, *even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my Word*, Isa. 66. 2.

What therefore I have said of Presumption, concerns not the humble in Spirit at all. I therefore am for gathering up the Stones, and for taking the Stumbling-blocks out of the way of God's People; and fore-warning of them that they lay the stumbling-block of their Iniquity before their faces, and that are for presuming upon God's mercy; and let them look to themselves, *Ezekiel* 14. 6, 7, 8.

Also our Text stands firm as ever it did, and our Observation is still of force, *That* Jesus Christ *would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest Sinners.* So then, let none *Despair*, let none *Presume*; Let none *despair* that are sorry for their sins, and would be saved by Jesus Christ: Let none *Presume*, that abide in the liking of their sins, though they seem to know the exceeding grace of Christ; for though the door stand wide open for the reception of the *Penitent*, yet 'tis fast enough barr'd.

barr'd and bolted againſt the preſumptuous ſinner. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatſoever a man ſows, that he ſhall reap.* It cannot be that God ſhould be *wheedled* out of his Mercy, or prevailed upon by lips of diſſimulation; *He knows them that truſt in him*, and that ſincerely come to him by Chriſt for mercy, *Nahum* 1. 7.

It is then, not the abundance of ſins committed, but the not coming heartily to God by Chriſt for Mercy, that ſhuts men out of doors: And though their not coming *heartily* may be ſaid to be *but* a Sin; yet 'tis *Such* a Sin, as cauſeth that all thy other ſins abide upon thee unforgiven.

God complains of this. *They have not cried unto me with their heart; They turned, but not to the moſt High. They turned feignedly*, Jer. 3. 10. *Hoſ.* 7. 4, 16.

Thus doing, his Soul hates; but the Penitent, humble, broken hearted Sinner, be his Tranſgreſſions red as Scarlet, red like Crimſon, in number as the Sand; though his tranſgreſſion cry to Heaven againſt him for Vengeance, and ſeem there to cry louder than do his Prayers, or Tears, or Groans for Mercy; yet he is ſafe. *To this man God will look*, Iſa. 2. 18. *chap.* 66, 2.

Seventhly,

Seventhly, Would Jeſus Chriſt have Mercy offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners? *Then here is ground for thoſe, that as to practice, have Not been ſuch, to come to him for mercy.*

Although there is no Sin little of it ſelf, becauſe it is a contradiction of the Nature and Majeſty of God; yet we muſt admit of divers numbers, and alſo of aggravations. *Two* Sins are not ſo many as *three*; nor are *three*, that are done in ignorance, ſo big as *One* that is done againſt light, againſt knowledge, and Conſcience. Alſo there is the Child in Sin, and a Man in Sin, that has his Hairs gray, and his Skin wrinkled for very Age. And we muſt put a difference betwixt theſe Sinners alſo. For can it be, that a Child of Seven, or ten, or ſixteen years old, ſhould be *ſuch* a Sinner, a Sinner ſo vile in the Eye of the Law, as he is who has walked according to the courſe of this World, forty, fifty, ſixty, or ſeventy Years? Now the Youth, this Stripling, though he is a Sinner, is but a little ſinner, when compared with ſuch.

Now I ſay, If there be room for the firſt ſort, for thoſe of the *biggeſt* ſize; certainly there is room for the *leſſer* ſize.

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If there be a Door wide enough for a Gyant to go in at, there is certainly room for a Dwarff. If Chriſt Jeſus has Grace enough to ſave great ſinners, he has ſurely Grace enough to ſave little ones. If he can forgive *five hundred pence*, for certain *he can forgive fifty*, Luk. 7. 41, 42.

But you ſaid before, that the little ſinners muſt ſtand by, untill the great ones have received their grace, and that's diſcouraging!

I anſwer, There are two ſorts of little Sinners, ſuch as *are* ſo, and ſuch as *feign* themſelves ſo. They are thoſe that feign themſelves ſo, *that I intended there*, and not thoſe that are indeed comparatively ſo. Such as feign themſelves ſo, may wait long enough before they obtain Forgiveneſs.

But again, A Sinner may be comparatively a little ſinner, and ſenſibly a great one. There is then *two ſorts of greatneſs in ſin*; greatneſs by reaſon of number, greatneſs by reaſon of throughneſs of conviction of the horrible nature of Sin. In this laſt ſenſe, *he that has but one ſin*, if ſuch [illegible] uld be found, may in hi[illegible] himſelf the biggeſt ſinne[illegible]. Let this Man, or this Child, therefore

therefore put himself among the great sinners, and plead with God as great sinners do, and expect to be saved with the great sinners, and as soon, and as heartily as they.

Yea, a little sinner, that comparatively is truly so, if he shall graciously give way to Conviction, and shall in God's light, diligently weigh the horrible nature of his own sins, may yet sooner obtain Forgiveness for them at the hands of the heavenly Father, than he that has ten times his sins, and so cause to cry ten times harder to God for Mercy.

For the *grievousness* of the Cry is a great thing with God; for if he will hear the Widdow, if she cries *at all*, how much more if she cries most *grievously*? Exod. 22. 22, 23.

It is not the number, but the true sense of the abominable nature of Sin, that makes the Cry for Pardon lamentable. He, as I said, that has many sins, may not cry so loud in the ears of God as he that has far fewer; he in our *present* sense that is in his own eyes the biggest sinner, is he that soonest findeth mercy.

The offer Then is to the biggest sinner, to the biggest sinner first, and the mercy is first obtained by him that first confesseth himself to be such an one. There

There are men that ſtrive at the throne of Grace for Mercy, by pleading the greatneſs of their Neceſſity. Now their Plea, as to the prevalency of it, lieth not in their counting up of the *number*, but in their ſence of the *greatneſs* of their ſins, and in the vehemency of their cry for Pardon. And it is obſervable, that though the Birth-right was *Rubens*, and for his fooliſhneſs, given to the Sons of *Joſeph*; yet *Judah* prevailed above his Brethren, and of him came the *Meſſias*, 1 Chron. 5. 1, 2.

There is a heavenly ſubtilty to be managed in this matter. *Thy Brother came with ſubtilty and hath taken away thy bleſſing.* The bleſſing belonged to *Eſau*, but *Jacob* by his diligence made it his own, *Gen.* 27. 35. The offer is to the biggeſt ſinner, to the biggeſt ſinner firſt, but if he forbears to cry, the ſinner that is a ſinner leſs by far than he, both as to number and the nature of tranſgreſſion, may get the bleſſing firſt, if he ſhall have grace to be-ſtir himſelf well; for the loudeſt Cry is heard furtheſt, and the moſt lamentable, pierces ſooneſt.

I therefore urge this Head, not becauſe I would have little ſinners go and tell God that they are little ſinners, there-

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by to think to obtain his Mercy; for verily, ſo they are never like to have it: For ſuch words declare, that ſuch a one hath no true ſenſe at all of the nature of his ſins.

Sin, as I ſaid, in the nature of it, is horrible; though it be but one ſingle ſin as to act; yea, though it be but a ſinful thought; and ſo worthily cails for the damnation of the Soul.

The Compariſon then, of little and great Sinners, is to go for good ſenſe among men: But to plead the fewneſs of thy ſins, or the comparative harmleſneſs of their quantity before God, argueth no ſound knowledge of the nature of thy Sin, and ſo no true ſenſe of the nature or need of Mercy.

Little Sinner, when therefore thou goeſt to God, though thou knoweſt in thy Conſcience, that thou, as to acts, art no Thief, no Murderer, no Whore, no Liar, no falſe Swearer, or the like, and in reaſon muſt needs underſtand, that *thus* thou art not ſo profanely vile as others; yet when thou goeſt to God for Mercy, know no mans ſins but thine own, make mention of no mans ſins but thine own. Alſo labour not to leſſen thy own, but magnifie and greaten them by all juſt Circumſtances,

Circumſtances, and be as if there was never a Sinner in the World but thy ſelf. Alſo cry out as if thou waſt the only undone Man; and that is the way to obtain God's Mercy.

It is one of the comelieſt Sights in the world, to ſee a little Sinner commenting upon the greatneſs of his ſins; and multiplying them to himſelf; till he makes them in his own eyes *bigger* and *higher* than he ſeeth any other man's ſins to be in the World; and as baſe a thing it is to ſee a man do otherwiſe, and as baſely will come on't, *Luk.* 18. 10, 11, 12, 13.

As therefore I ſaid to the great Sinner before, let him take heed *leſt he preſumes*, I ſay now to the little Sinner, let him take heed *that he don't diſſemble:* For there is as great an aptneſs in the little Sinner to diſſemble, as there is in the great one. *He that hideth his ſins ſhall not proſper*, be he a ſinner little or great, *Prov.* 28. 13.

Eighthly, Would Jeſus Chriſt have Mercy offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinner? *Then this ſhews the true cauſe why Satan makes ſuch head as he doth againſt him.*

The

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Sin, as I ſaid, in the nature of it, is horrible; though it be but one ſingle ſin as to act; yea, though it be but a ſinful thought; and ſo worthily cails for the damnation of the Soul.

The Compariſon then, of little and great Sinners, is to go for good ſenſe among men: But to plead the fewneſs of thy ſins, or the comparative harmleſneſs of their quantity before God, argueth no ſound knowledge of the nature of thy Sin, and ſo no true ſenſe of the nature or need of Mercy.

Little Sinner, when therefore thou goeſt to God, though thou knoweſt in thy Conſcience, that thou, as to acts, art no Thief, no Murderer, no Whore, no Liar, no falſe Swearer, or the like, and in reaſon muſt needs underſtand, that *thus* thou art not ſo profanely vile as others; yet when thou goeſt to God for Mercy, know no mans ſins but thine own, make mention of no mans ſins but thine own. Alſo labour not to leſſen thy own, but magnifie and greaten them by all juſt Circumſtances,

Circumſtances, and be as if there was never a Sinner in the World but thy ſelf. Alſo cry out as if thou waſt the only undone Man; and that is the way to obtain God's Mercy.

It is one of the comelieſt Sights in the world, to ſee a little Sinner commenting upon the greatneſs of his ſins; and multiplying them to himſelf; till he makes them in his own eyes *bigger* and *higher* than he ſeeth any other man's ſins to be in the World; and as baſe a thing it is to ſee a man do otherwiſe, and as baſely will come on't, *Luk.* 18. 10, 11, 12, 13.

As therefore I ſaid to the great Sinner before, let him take heed *leſt he preſumes*, I ſay now to the little Sinner, let him take heed *that he don't diſſemble:* For there is as great an aptneſs in the little Sinner to diſſemble, as there is in the great one. *He that hideth his ſins ſhall not proſper*, be he a ſinner little or great, *Prov.* 28. 13.

Eighthly, Would Jeſus Chriſt have Mercy offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinner? *Then this ſhews the true cauſe why Satan makes ſuch head as he doth againſt him.*

The

The *Father* and the *holy* Spirit are well *ſpoken* of by all Deluders and deceived Perſons; Chriſt only is the Rock of Offence. *Behold I lay in Zion a ſtumbling-Stone, and a Rock of Offence*, Rom. 9. 33. Not that Satan careth for the Father or the Spirit more than he careth for the Son, but he can let men alone with their notions of the Father and the Spirit, for he knows they ſhall never enjoy the Father or the Spirit, if indeed they receive not the Merits of the Son. *He that hath the Son, hath Life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not Life*, however they may boaſt themſelves of the Father and the Spirit, 1 *John.* 5. 12. Again, *Whoſoever tranſgreſſeth, and abideth not in the Doctrine of Chriſt, hath not God: He that abideth in the Doctrine of Chriſt, hath both the Father and the Son*, 2 John 9.

Chriſt, and Chriſt only, is he that can make us capable to enjoy God with Life and Joy to all eternity. Hence he calls himſelf *The Way to the Father*; *The true and living Way*, Joh. 14. 6. Heb. 10. 19, 20. For we cannot come to the Father *but by him.* Satan *knows* this, therefore he hates him. Deluded Perſons are *ignorant* of this, and therefore they are ſo led up and down by Satan by the noſe, as they are.

There

There are many things by which Satan has taken occasion to greaten his rage against Jesus Christ.

As first, His love to Man, and then the many *expressions* of *that* love. He hath taken Man's nature upon him; he hath in that nature fulfilled the Law to bring in Righteousness for Man; and hath spilt his Blood for the Reconciling of Man to God; he hath broke the neck of Death, put away Sin, destroyed the works of the Devil, and got into his own hands the Keys of Death: And all these are heinous things to Satan. He cannot abide Christ for this. Besides, he hath eternal Life in himself, and that to bestow upon us; and we in all likelihood are to possess *the very places*, from which the *Satans* by transgression fell, if not places more glorious. Wherefore he must needs be angry. And is it not a vexatious thing to him, that we should be admitted to the Throne of Grace by Christ, while he stands bound over in Chaines of Darkness, to answer for his Rebellions against God and his Son, at the terrible day of Judgement? Yea, we poor Dust and Ashes must become his Judges, and triumph over him for ever; and all this, long of Jesus Christ; for he

he is the Meritorious Cauſe of all this. Now though Satan ſeeks to be revenged for this, yet he knows it is in vain to attack the Perſon of Chriſt, he has overcome him; therefore he tampers with a company of ſilly Men, that he may Villifie him by them. And they, bold fools as they are, will not ſpare to ſpit in his face. They will rail at his Perſon, *and deny the very Being of it*; they will rail at his Blood, *and deny the Merit and Worth of it.* They will deny the very end, why he accompliſhed the Law, and by jiggs, and tricks, and quirks, which he helpeth them to, they ſet up fond Names and Images in his place, and give the glory of a Saviour to them. Thus Satan worketh under the Name of *Chriſt*; and his Miniſters under the name of the Miniſters of Righteouſneſs.

And by his Wiles and Stratagems he undoes a world of men; But there is a Seed, and they ſhall ſerve him, and it ſhall be counted to the Lord for a Generation. Theſe ſhall ſee their ſins, and that Chriſt is the Way to Happineſs. Theſe ſhall venture themſelves both Body and Soul upon his Worthineſs.

All this Satan knows, and therefore his rage is kindled the more. Where-

fore

ſore according to his ability and allowance, he aſſaulteth, tempteth, abuſeth, and ſtirs up what he can to be hurtful to theſe poor People, that he may, while his time ſhall laſt; make it as hard and difficult for them to go to eternal Glory as he can. Often-times he abuſes them with wrong apprehenſions of God, and with wrong apprehenſions of Chriſt. He alſo caſts them into the Mire, to the reproach of Religion, the ſhame of their Brethren, the deriſion of the World, and diſhonour of God. He holds our hands while the World buffets us; he puts Bear-skins upon us, and then ſets the Dogs at us. He bedawbeth us with his own Foam, and then tempts us to believe that that bedawbing comes from our ſelves.

Oh! the rage and the roaring of this Lion! and the hatred that he manifeſts againſt the Lord Jeſus, and againſt them that are purchaſed with his Blood! But yet in the midſt of all this, the Lord Jeſus ſends forth his Herald to proclaim in the Nations, his love to the World; and to invite them to come in to him for Life. Yea, his Ivitation is ſo large, that it offereth his Mercy in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners of every Age, which

which augments the Devils rage the more.

Wherefore, as I ſaid before, fret he, fume he, the Lord Jeſus *will divide the Spoil with this great one; yea, he ſhall divide the Spoil with the ſtrong, becauſe he hath poured out his Soul unto death, and was numbred with the Tranſgreſſors, and bare the ſin of many, and made Interceſſion for the tranſgreſſors*, Iſa. 53. 12.

Ninthly, Would *Jeſus Chriſt* have Mercy offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinner? *Let the Tempted harp upon This ſtring for their help and conſolation.* The Tempted wherever he dwells, always thinks himſelf the biggeſt Sinner, one moſt unworthy of eternal Life.

This is Satans Maſter-Argument; Thou art a horrible Sinner, a Hypocrite, one that has a profane heart, and one that is an utter ſtranger to a work of Grace. I ſay, this is his *Maul*, his *Club*, his Maſter-piece; He doth with this, as ſome do by their *moſt inchanting* Songs, ſings them every where. I believe there are but few Saints in the World that have not had this temptation ſounding in their Ears. But were they but aware, Satan by all this, does but

but drive them to the Gap out at which they ſhould go, and ſo eſcape his roaring.

Saith he, Thou art a great Sinner, a horrible Sinner, a profane hearted Wretch, one that cannot be matcht for a Vile one in the Country.

And all this while *Chriſt* ſays to his Miniſters, offer Mercy in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners. So that this Temptation drives thee directly into the Arms of *Jeſus Chriſt*.

Was therefore the Tempted but aware, he might ſay, Ay Satan, ſo I am, I am a Sinner of the biggeſt ſize, and therefore have moſt need of *Jeſus Chriſt*: Yea, *becauſe* I am ſuch a wretch, therefore *Jeſus Chriſt* calls me; yea, he calls me firſt: The firſt proffer of the Goſpel is to be made to the *Jeruſalem-ſinner*: I am he, wherefore ſtand back Satan, make a *lane*, my right is firſt to come to Jeſus Chriſt.

This now would be *like* for *like*. This would foil the Devil: This would make him ſay, I muſt not deal with this man thus; for then I put a Sword into his hand to cut off my head.

And this is the meaning of *Peter*, when he ſaith, *Reſiſt him ſtedfaſt in the Faith*,

1 *Pet.* 5. 9. And of *Paul* when he ſaith Take the Shield of Faith, wherewith ye ſhall be able to quench all the fiery Darts of the Wicked, *Epheſ.* 6. 16.

Wherefore is it ſaid, *Begin at Jeruſalem*, if the *Jeruſalem ſinner* is not to have the benefit of it? And if I am to have the benefit of it, let me call it to mind when Satan haunts me with the continual remembrance of my ſins, of my *Jeruſalem-ſins*. Satan and my Conſcience ſays, I am the biggeſt ſinner, *Chriſt* offereth Mercy in the firſt place to the biggeſt ſinners. Nor is the manner of the Offer other but ſuch as ſuiteth with my mind. I am ſorry for my ſin; yea, ſorry at my heart that ever ſinful Thought did enter, or find the leaſt entertainment in my wicked mind: And might I obtain my Wiſh, I would never more that my heart ſhould be a place for ought but the Grace, and Spirit, and Faith of the Lord *Jeſus*.

I ſpeak not this to leſſen my Wickedneſs: I would not for all the World, but be placed by mine own Conſcience in the very *front* of the biggeſt Sinners, that I might be one of the firſt that are beckoned by the gracious Hand of *Jeſus* the *Saviour*, to come to him for Mercy.

We

Well Sinner, thou now ſpeakeſt like a Chriſtan, but ſay thus in a *ſtrong Spirit* in the hour of Temptation, and then thou wilt, to thy commendation and comfort, quit thy ſelf well.

This improving of *Chriſt* in dark hours, is the Life, though the hardeſt part of our Chriſtianity. We ſhould neither ſtop at Darkneſs, nor at the raging of our Luſts, but go on in a way of venturing and caſting the whole of our Affair for the next World, at the foot of *Jeſus Chriſt*. This is the way to make the Darkneſs *Light*, and alſo to *alay* the *raging* of our Corruption.

The firſt time the *Paſſover* was eaten, *was in the night*; and when *Iſrael* took Courage to go forward, though the Sea ſtood in their way like a devouring Gulf, and the Hoſt of the *Egyptians* follow them at the heels; yet the Sea gives place, and their Enemies were as ſtill as a ſtone till they were gone over, *Exod.* 12. 8. *chap.* 14. 13, 14, 21, 22. *chap.* 15, 16.

There is nothing like Faith to help at a pinch; Faith diſſolves Doubts, as the Sun drives away the Miſts. And that you may not be put out, know your time, as I ſaid, of believing is always. There

are times when ſome Graces may be out of uſe, but there is *no* time wherein Faith can be ſaid to be ſo. Wherefore Faith muſt be always in exerciſe.

Faith is the *eye*, is the *mouth*, is the *hand*, and one of theſe is of uſe all day long, *Faith* is to *ſee*, to *receive*, to *work*, or to *eat*; and a Chriſtian ſhould be ſeeing, or receiving, or working, or feeding all day long. Let it rain, let it blow, let it thunder, let it lighten, a Chriſtian muſt ſtill believe: *At what time*, ſaid the good man, *I am afraid, I will truſt in thee*, Pſal. 56. 2, 3.

Nor can we have a better encouragement to do this, than is by the Text ſet before us, even an open heart for a *Jeruſalem-ſinner*. And if for a *Jeruſalem-Sinner to* come, then for ſuch an one, *when* come. If ſuch an one *To Be* ſaved, then for ſuch a one that *Is* ſaved. If for ſuch a one *To* be pardoned his great tranſgreſſions, then for ſuch a one who *Is* pardoned theſe, to come daily to *Jeſus Chriſt* too, to be cleanſed and ſet free from his common Infirmities, and from the Iniquities of his holy things.

Therefore let the poor Sinner that would be ſaved, labour for skill to make the beſt Improvement of the grace of Chriſt

Christ to help him against the temptations of the Devil and his Sins.

Tenthly, Would *Jesus Christ* have Mercy offered in the *first place* to the biggest Sinners? *Let those men consider this, that* (have, or) *may in a day of trial have spoken or done what their Profession or Conscience told them they should not, and that have the guilt and burden thereof upon their Consciences.*

Whether a thing be wrong or right, Guilt may pursue him that doth contrary to his Conscience. But suppose a man should deny his God, or his Christ, or relinquish a good Profession, and be under the real guilt there of? Shall he therefore conclude he is gone for ever? Let him come again with *Peter*'s tears, and no doubt but he shall obtain *Peter*'s Forgiveness. For the Text *includes the biggest sinners.*

And 'tis observable, That *before this Clause* was put into this Commission, *Peter* was pardoned his horrible Revolt from his Master. He that Revolteth in the day of Trial, if he is not shot quite dead upon the place, but is sensible of his Wound, and calls out for a *Chyrurgion*, shall find his Lord at hand to pour Wine and Oyl into his Wounds, that

he may again be healed. And to incourage him to think that there may be Mercy for him: Beſides what we find Recorded of *Peter*, you read in the *Acts*, ſome was through the violence of their Trials, compelled to Blaſpheme, and yet are called Saints, *Acts* 26. 9, 10, 11.

Hence you have a Promiſe or two that ſpeaks concerning ſuch a kind of Men, to incourage us to think that at leaſt ſome of them ſhall come back to the Lord their God. *Shall they fall*, ſaith he, *and not ariſe? Shall they turn away, and not return?* Jer. 8. 4. *And in that day I will aſſemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that was driven out, and her that I have Afflicted. And I will make her that halteth a Remnant, and her that was caſt off, a ſtrong Nation; And the Lord ſhall reign over them in Mount Zion for ever.* What we are to underſtand by her that halteth, is beſt expreſſed by the Prophet *Elijah*, *Mic.* 4. 6, 7. *Zeph.* 3. 19. 1 *Kings* 18. 21.

I will conclude then, that for them that *have* halted, or *may* halt, the Lord has Mercy in the Bank, and is willing to accept them if they return to him again.

Perhaps

Perhaps they may never be after that of any great eſteem in the Houſe of God, but if the Lord will admit them to favour and forgiveneſs; O exceeding and underſerved Mercy! See *Ezek.* 44. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

Thou then that mayeſt be the Man, Remember this, that there is Mercy alſo for thee. Return therefore to God, and to his Son, who hath yet in ſtore for thee, and who will do thee good.

But perhaps thou wilt ſay, He doth not ſave all Revolters, and therefore perhaps not me.

Anſwer, Art thou returning to God? If thou art returning, thou art the Man. *Return ye backſliding Children, and I will heal your backſlidings*, Jer. 3. 22.

Some, as I ſaid, that Revolt, are ſhot dead upon the place, and for them, who can help them? But for them that cry out of their Wounds, 'tis a ſign they are yet alive, and if they uſe the means in time, doubtleſs they may be healed.

Chriſt Jeſus has bags of Mercy that was never yet broken up or unſealed. Hence it is ſaid, he has goodneſs *laied up*; things *reſerved* in Heaven for his. And if he breaks up one of theſe bags, who can tell what he can do! Hence

Hence his Love is ſaid to be ſuch as *paſſeth Knowledge*, and that his Riches are *unſearchable*. He has, *no body* knows what; for *no body* knows who! He has by him in ſtore for ſuch as ſeem, in the view of all men, to be gone beyond recovery. For this the Text is plain. What Man or Angel could have thought that the *Jeruſalem-ſinners* had been yet on this ſide of an impoſſiblty of enjoying Life and Mercy? Hadſt thou ſeen their actions, and what horrible things they did to the Son of God: Yea, how ſtoutly they backed what they did, with reſolves and endeavours to perſevere, when they had killed his Perſon, againſt his Name and Doctrine: And that there was not found among them all that while as we read of, the leaſt remorſe or regret for theſe their doings: Couldſt thou have imagined that Mercy would ever have took hold of them, at leaſt ſo ſoon! Nay, that they ſhould, of all the World, be counted thoſe *Only* meet to have it offered to them in the *very firſt place!* For ſo my Text commands, ſaying, *Preach Repentance and Remiſſion of Sin among all Nations, Beginning at Jeruſalem.*

I tell you the thing is a Wonder, and muſt for ever ſtand for a Wonder among the Sons of Men. It ſtands alſo for an everlaſting Invitation and Allurement to the biggeſt Sinners to come to *Chriſt* for Mercy.

Now, ſince, in the Opinion of all Men, the Revolter is ſuch a one; if he has, as I ſaid before, any Life in him, let him take incouragment to come again, that he may live by Chriſt.

Eleventhly, Would *Jeſus Chriſt* have Mercy offered in the *firſt place* to the biggeſt Sinners? *Then let God's Miniſters tell them ſo.* There is an Incidence in us, I know not how it doth come about, when we are Converted, to contemn them that are left behind. Poor fools as we are, we forget that we our ſelves were ſo. *Tit.* 3. 2, 3.

But would it not become us better, ſince we have taſted that the Lord is gracious, to carry it towards them ſo, that we may give them Convincing ground to believe, that we have found that Mercy which alſo ſets open the Door for them to come and partake with us.

Miniſters, I ſay, ſhould do thus, both by their Doctrine, and in all other reſpects.

Auſterity doth not become us, neither in Doctrine nor in Converſation: We our ſelves live by Grace; Let us give as we receive, and labour to perſwade our fellow-ſinners which God has left behind us, to follow after, that they may partake with us of Grace. We are ſaved by Grace, let us live like them that are *graceous*. Let all our things (to the World) be done in Charity towards them, Pity them, Pray for them, be familiar with them for their good. Let us lay aſide our fooliſh, worldly, carnal *grandure*; Let us not walk the Streets, and have ſuch behaviours as ſignifie we are ſcarce for touching of the poor ones that are left behind, no not with a pair of *Tongs*. It becomes not Miniſters thus to do.

Remember your Lord, he was familiar with Publicans and Sinners to a Proverb. *Behold a gluttonous man, and a Wine-bibber, a friend of Publicans and Sinners*, Matt. 11. 19. The firſt part, concerning his gluttonous eating and drinking, to be ſure was an horrible ſlander? but for the other, *nothing was ever ſpoke truer*

of

of him by the World. Now why ſhould we lay hands croſs on this Text, that is, chooſe good Victuals, and love the ſweet Wine better than the Salvation of the poor Publican? Why not familiar with ſinners provided we hate their ſpots and blemiſhes, and ſeek that they may be healed of them?

Why not fellowly with our Carnal Neighbours? If we do take occaſion to do ſo, that we may drop, and be yet diſtilling ſome good Doctrine upon their Souls? Why not go to the poor Man's Houſe, and give him a *Penny*, and a Scripture to think upon? Why not ſend for the Poor to fetch away, at leaſt, the Fragments of thy Table, that the Bowels of thy Fellow-ſinner may be refreſht as well as thine?

Miniſters ſhould be Exemplary: But I am an inferiour Man, and muſt take heed of too much medling. But might I, I would meddle with them, with their Wives, and with their Children too. I mean not this of all, but of them that deſerve it, though I may not name them.

But, I ſay, let Miniſters follow the ſteps of their bleſſed Lord, who by Word and Deeds ſhewed his Love to the Salvation

Salvation of the World, in ſuch a carriage as declared him to prefer their Salvation before his own private Concern. For we are commanded to follow his ſteps, *who did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth.*

And as I have ſaid concerning Miniſters, ſo I ſay to all the Brethren, carry it ſo, that all the World may ſee, that indeed you are the Sons of Love.

Love your Saviour; Yea, ſhew one to another that you love him, not only by a ſeeming love of Affection, but with the love of Duty. Practical Love is beſt. Many love *Chriſt* with nothing but the lick of the Tongue. Alas! *Chriſt Jeſus* the Lord, muſt not be put off thus: *He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them*, ſaith he, *he it is that loveth me*, Joh. 14. 11.

Practical Love, which ſtands in Self-denial, in Charity to my Neighbour, and a Patient enduring of Affliction for his Name: This is counted Love.

Right Love to *Chriſt*, is that which carries in it a provoking Argument to others of the Brethren, *Heb.* 10. 24.

Should a Man ask me how he ſhould know that he loveth the Children of God? The beſt anſwer I could give him,

him, would be in the Words of the Apoſtle *John*; *By this*, ſaith he, *we know we love the Children of God, when we love God, and keep his Commandments*, 1 Joh. 5. 2.

Love to God and Chriſt, is *then* ſhewn, when we are tender of his Name; and then we ſhew our ſelves tender of his Name, when we are afraid to break any the leaſt of his Commandments. And when we are here, then do we ſhew our love to our Brother alſo.

Now we have Obligation ſufficient thus to do, for that our Lord loved us, and gave himſelf for us, to deliver us from Death, that we might live through him.

The World, when they hear the Doctrine that I have aſſerted and handled in this little Book, to wit, That *Jeſus Chriſt* would have Mercy offered in the *firſt place to the biggeſt Sinners*; will be apt, becauſe themſelves are Unbelievers, to think that this is a Doctrine that leads to Looſeneſs, and that gives liberty to the Fleſh; but if you that Believe, love your Brethren, and your Neighbours truly, and as you ſhould, you will put to ſilence the ignorance of ſuch fooliſh Men, and ſtop their mouths from ſpeaking Evil of you. And

And, I ſay, let the love of *Chriſt* conſtrain us to this. Who deſerveth our Heart, our Mouth, our Life, our Goods, ſo much as *Jeſus Chriſt*, who has bought us to himſelf by his Blood, to this very end, that we ſhould *be a peculiar People, zealous of good Works?*

There is nothing more ſeemly in the World, than to ſee a Chriſtian walk as becomes the Goſpel; nor any thing more unbecoming a Reaſonable Creature, than to hear a man ſay, *I believe in Chriſt*, and yet ſee in his Life, Debauchery and Profaineneſs. Might I, ſuch men ſhould be counted the baſeſt of men; ſuch men ſhould be counted by all, unworthy of the Name of a *Chriſtian*, and ſhould be ſhuned by every good man, as ſuch who are the very Plague of Profeſſion.

For ſo it is written, *We ſhould carry it towards them. Whoſo has a Form of Godlineſs, and deny the power thereof, from ſuch we muſt turn away.*

It has oft-times come into my mind, to ask, by what means it is, That the Goſpel Profeſſion ſhould be ſo Taunted with Looſe and Carnal Goſpellers? And I could never arrive to better Satisfaction in the matter, than this, Such men

are

are made Profeſſors by the Devil, and ſo by him put among the reſt of the Godly. A certain Man had a fruitleſs Figg-Tree planted in his Vineyard; but by whom was it planted there? Even by him that ſowed the Tares, his own Children, among the Wheat, *Luke* 13. 6. *Matt.* 13. 37, 38, 39, 40. And that was the Devil. But why doth the Devil do thus? Not of love to them, but to make of them Offences and Stumbling blocks to others. For he knows that a looſe Profeſſor in the Church, does more miſchief to Religion, than ten can do to it that are in the World.

Was it not, think you, the Devil that ſtirred up the Damoſel that you read of in *Acts* 16. to cry out, *Theſe are the Servants of the Moſt high God, that ſhew unto us the way of Salvation?* Yes it was, as is evident, *For Paul was grieved to hear it.* But why did the Devil ſtir up her to cry ſo? but becauſe that was the way to blemiſh the Goſpel, and to make the World think that it came from the ſame hand as did her South-ſaying and Witchery, *Ver.* 16. 17, 18. *Holineſs, O Lord, becomes thy Houſe for ever.*

Let therefore, whoever they be that profeſs the Name of *Chriſt*, take heed that

that they Scandal not that Profeſſion which they make of him, ſince he has ſo graciouſly offered us, as we are Sinners of the biggeſt ſize, in the *firſt place*, his Grace to Save us.

HAving thus far ſpoken of the riches of the Grace of Chriſt, and of the freeneſs of his Heart to imbrace the *Jeruſalem-ſinners*; it may not be amiſs to give you, yet, *as a caution*, an intimation of one thing, namely, *That this grace and freeneſs of his Heart is limited to time and day*; *the which*, *whoſo* overſtandeth, *ſhall periſh notwithſtanding*.

For, as a King, who of Grace, ſendeth out to his Rebellious People an offer of Pardon, if they accept thereof by ſuch a day, yet beheadeth, or hangeth thoſe that come not in for mercy until the *day* or *time* be paſt: So Chriſt Jeſus has ſet the Sinner a day, *a day of Salvation*, *an acceptable time*, but he who ſtandeth out, or goeth on in Rebellion beyond that time, is like to come off with the loſs of his Soul, 2 *Cor.* 6. 2. *Heb.* 3. 13, 16, 17, 18, 19. *chap.* 4. 7. *Luk.* 19. 41, 42.

Since

Since therefore things are thus, it may be convenient here to touch a little upon theſe particulars.

Firſt, That this Day, or Time, thus limited, when it is conſidered with reference to this or that man; is, *oftimes* undiſcerned by the perſon concerned therein, and *always* is kept ſecret as to the *ſhutting up* thereof.

And this in the wiſdom of God is thus, to the end, no man, when called upon, ſhould put off turning to God to another time: *Now*, and *to Day*, is that and only that which is revealed in Holy Writ, *Pſal.* 50. 22. *Eccleſ.* 12. 1. *Heb.* 3. 13, 16.

And this ſhews us the deſperat hazzards which thoſe men run, who when *invitation*, or *conviction* attends them, put off turning to God to be ſaved till another, and as they think, a more fit ſeaſon and *time*. For many by ſo doing, defer this to do, till the day of God's patience and long-ſuffering is ended: and then, for their Prayers and Cryes after mercy, they receive nothing but mocks, and are laughed at by the God of Heaven, *Prov.* 1. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29. *Iſa.* 65. 12, 13, 14, 15. *chap.* 66. 4. *Zech.* 7. 11, 12, 13.

Secondly,

Secondly, Another thing to be considered is this, namely, that the day of God's grace with some men, *begins* sooner, and also sooner *ends* than it doth with others. Those at the *first* hour of the day, had their Call sooner than they who were called upon to turn to God at the sixth hour of the day; yea and they who were hired at the third hour, had their Call sooner than they who were called at the eleventh, *Matt.* 20. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

1. The day of God's patience began with *Ishmael*, and also ended, before he was twenty years old. At thirteen years of age he was Circumcised; the next year after, *Isaac* was born; and then *Ishmael* was fourteen years old. Now that day that *Isaac* was weaned, that day was *Ishmael* rejected: and suppose that *Isaac* was three years old before he was weaned; that was but the seventeenth year of *Ishmael*; wherefore the day of God's grace was ended with him betimes, *Gen.* 17. 24, 25. *chap.* 21. 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10. *Gal.* 4. 30.

2. *Cain*'s day ended with him betimes for after God had rejected him, he lived to beget many Children, and build a City, and to do many other things.

But

But alas, all that while he was a Fugitive and a Vagabond. Nor carried he any thing with him, after the day of his rejection was come; but this doleful language in his Conſcience, *From God's Face ſhall I be hid*, Gen. 4. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

3. *Eſau*, Through his extravagancies would needs go ſell his Birthright, not fearing (as other confident fools) but that yet the bleſſing would ſtill be his, after which he lived many years, but all of them under the wrath of God, as was, when time came, made appear to his deſtruction; for *when he would have inherited the bleſſing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he ſought it carefully with tears*, Heb. 12. 14, 15, 16.

Many inſtances might be given, as to ſuch tokens of the diſpleaſure of God againſt ſuch as ſool away, as the Wiſe Man has it, the prize which is put into their hand, *Prov.* 17. 16.

Let theſe things therefore be a further caution to thoſe that ſit under the glorious ſound of the Goſpel, and hear of the Riches of the Grace of God in Chriſt to poor ſinners.

To ſlight Grace, to deſpiſe Mercy, and to ſtop the Ear when God ſpeaks, when he ſpeaks ſuch great things, ſo much to our profit, is a great provocation.

He offereth, he calls, he woes, he invites, he prays, he beſeeches us, in this day of his Grace, to be reconciled to him: yea, and has provided for us the means of reconciliation himſelf: Now this deſpiſed, muſt needs be provoking; and it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

But ſome man may ſay unto me, Fain I would be ſaved, fain I would be ſaved by Chriſt: But I fear this day of Grace is paſt, and that I ſhall periſh, notwithſtanding the exceeding riches of the Grace of God.

Anſwer, To this doubt I would anſwer ſeveral things.

Firſt, With reſpect to this day.

Secondly, With reſpect to thy deſires.

Thirdly, With reſpect to thy tears.

Firſt, With reſpect to the day; That is, whether it be ended with a man, or no.

1. Art thou jogged, and ſhaken, and moleſted at the hearing of the Word? Is thy Conſcience awakened and convinced then, that thou art at preſent in a periſhing ſtate, and that thou haſt need to cry to God for Mercy? This is a hope-

ful

ful ſign that this day of Grace is not paſt with thee. For uſually they that are *paſt Grace*, are alſo in their Conſcience *paſt feeling*, being *ſeared with a hot iron*. Eph. 4. 18, 19. 1 Tim. 4. 1, 2.

Conſequently thoſe *paſt grace*, muſt be ſuch as are denied the awakening fruits of the Word Preached. *The dead that hear*, ſaies Chriſt, *ſhall live*; at leaſt wiſe Chriſt has not quite done with them; the day of God's patience is not at an end with them, *John* 5. 25.

2. Is there in thy more retired condition, Arguings, Struglings, and Strivings with thy Spirit to perſwade thee of the vanity of what vain things thou loveſt, and to win thee in thy Soul to a choice of Chriſt Jeſus, and his heavenly things? Take heed and rebel not, for the day of God's grace and patience will not be paſt with thee, till he ſaith, *His Spirit ſhall ſtrive no more with thee*; for then the wo comes, when *he ſhall depart from them*; and when he ſaies to the means of Grace, *Let them alone*, Hoſ. 4. 17. *chap.* 9. 12.

3. Art thou viſited in the Night ſeaſons with dreams about thy ſtate, and that thou art in danger of being loſt? Haſt thou Heart-ſhaken apprehenſions when deep ſleep's upon thee, of Hell, Death and

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Firſt, With reſpect to this day.

Secondly, With reſpect to thy deſires.

Thirdly, With reſpect to thy fears.

Firſt, With reſpect to the day; That is, whether it be ended with a man, or no.

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and Judgment to come? Theſe are ſigns that God has not wholly left thee, or caſt thee behind his back for ever. *For God ſpeaks once, yea twice, yet man perceives it not; in a Dream, in a Viſion of the Night, when deap ſleep falls upon man, in ſlumberings upon the Bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and ſealeth their inſtruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpoſe* (his ſinful purpoſes) *and hide pride from man*, Job 33. 14, 15, 16, 17.

All this while God has not left the ſinner, nor is come to the end of his patience towards him, but ſtands, at leaſt, with the door of Grace a Jare in his hand, as being loth, as yet to bolt it againſt him.

4. Art thou followed with affliction, and doſt thou hear God's angry voice in thy afflictions? Doth he ſend with the affliction an *Interpreter* to ſhew thee thy vileneſs; and why, or wherefore the hand of God is upon thee, and upon what thou haſt; to wit, that it is for thy ſinning againſt him, and that thou mighteſt be turned to him? If ſo, thy *Summer* is not quite ended; thy *Harveſt* is not yet quite over and gone. Take heed, ſtand out no longer, leaſt he cauſe darkneſs, and leaſt thy feet ſtumble upon the dark mountains;

mountains; and leſt while you look for light, he turn it into the ſhadow of death, and make it groſs darkneſs, *Jer.* 8. 20. *chap.* 13. 15, 16, 17.

5. Art thou croſſed, diſappointed and *waylaid*, and overthrown in all thy fooliſh ways and doings? This is a ſign God has not quite left thee, but that he ſtill waits upon thee to turn thee. Conſider, I ſay, has he made a hedge, and a Wall to ſtop thee? Has he croſſed thee in all thou putteſt thy hand unto? Take it as a call to turn to him, for by his thus doing, he ſhews he has a mind to give thee a better portion. For uſually when God gives up men, and reſolves to let them alone in the Broad Way, he gives them *Rope*, and lets them have their deſires in all hurtful things, *Hoſ.* 2. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. *Pſal.* 73. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. *Rom.* 11. 9.

Therefore take heed to this alſo, that thou ſtrive not againſt this hand of God: but betake thy ſelf to ſerious enquiry into the cauſes of this hand of God upon thee, and encline to think, 'tis becauſe the Lord would have thee look to that, which is better than what thou wouldeſt ſatisfie thy ſelf withall. When God had a mind to make the Prodigal go home to his

his Father, he ſent a Famine upon him, and denied him a Belly-full of the Husks which the Swine did eat. And obſerve it, now he was in his ſtrait, he betook him to conſideration of the good that there was in his Fathers Houſe; yea, he reſolved to home to his Father, and his Father dealt well with him; he received him with Muſick and Dancing, becauſe he had received him ſafe and ſound, *Luk.* 15. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32

6. Haſt thou any inticing touches of the word of God upon thy mind? Doth, as it were, ſome holy word of God, give a glance upon thee, caſt a ſmile upon thee, let fall, though it be but one drop of its favour upon thy Spirit; yea, though it ſtaies but one moment with thee? O! then the day of Grace is not paſt! The Gate of Heaven is not ſhut! Nor God's Heart and Bowels withdrawn from thee as yet. Take heed therefore, and beware that thou make much of the Heavenly Gift, and of that good word of God of the which he has made thee taſt. Beware, I ſay, and take heed, there may be a falling away for all this; but, I ſay, as yet, God has not left thee, as yet he has not caſt thee off, *Heb.* 6. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

Secondly,

Secondly, With reſpect to thy deſires, what are they? Wouldſt thou be *ſaved*? Wouldſt thou be ſaved with a *thorow* ſalvation? Wouldſt thou be ſaved from *guilt*, and *filth* too? Wouldſt thou be the ſervant of thy Saviour? Art thou indeed weary of the ſervice of thy old Maſter the Devil, Sin and the World? And has theſe deſires put thy Soul to the flight? Haſt thou through deſires, betake thy ſelf to thy heels? Doſt fly to him that is a Saviour from the wrath to come, for life? If theſe be thy deſires, and if they be unfeigned, fear not: Thou art one of thoſe *Runaways* which God has commanded our Lord to receive, and not to ſend thee back to the Devil thy Maſter again, but to give thee a place in his Houſe, even the place which liketh thee beſt. *Thou ſhalt not deliver to his Maſter*, ſaies he, *the Servant which is eſcaped from his Maſter unto thee. He ſhall dwell with thee, even among you in that place which he ſhall chuſe, in one of thy Gates where it liketh him beſt; thou ſhalt not oppreſs him*, Deut. 23. 15, 16.

This is a command to the Church, conſequently to the Head of the Church; for all commands from God come to her through her Head. Whence I conclude,

that, that as *Iſrael* of old was to receive the *Runaway*-Servant who eſcaped from a Heathen Maſter to them, and ſhould not dare to ſend him back to his Maſter again: So Chriſt's Church now, and conſequently Chriſt himſelf may not, will not refuſe that ſoul that has made his eſcape from Sin, Satan, the World and Hell, unto him, but will certainly let him dwell in his Houſe, among his Saints, in that place which he ſhall chooſe, even where it liketh him beſt. For he ſays in another place, *And him that cometh to me, I well in no wiſe caſt out.* In no wiſe, let his crimes be what they will, either for nature, multitude, or the attendance of aggravating circumſtances.

Wherefore if thy deſires be firm, ſound, unfeigned, to become the ſaved of Chriſt, and his ſervant: Fear not, he will not, he will in no wiſe put thee away, or turn thee over to thy old Maſter again.

Thirdly, As to thy fears, whatever they are, let that be ſuppoſed which is ſuppoſed before, and they are groundleſs, and ſo of no weight.

Object. *But I am afraid I am not elect, or choſen to a ſalvation, though you called me fool a little before for ſo fearing.* Anſw.

Anſw. Though election is, in order, before calling, as to God, yet the knowledge of Calling muſt go before the belief of my Election, as to my ſelf. Wherefore ſouls that doubt of the truth of their Effectual Calling, do but plunge themſelves into a deeper labyrinth of confuſion, that concern themſelves with their election; I mean, while they labour to know it before they prove their Calling. *Make your Calling, and* ſo your *Election ſure*, 2 Pet. 1. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Wherefore, at preſent, lay the thoughts of thy Election by, and ask thy ſelf theſe queſtions; Do I ſee my loſt condition? Do I ſee ſalvation is no where but in Chriſt? Would I ſhare in this ſalvation by Faith of him? And would I, as was ſaid afore, be throughly ſaved, to wit, from the filth, as from the guilt? Do I love Chriſt, his Father, his Saints, his Word and Ways? This is the way to prove we are Elect. Wherefore, ſinner, when Satan, or thine own heart ſeek to *puzzle* thee with Election; ſay thou, I cannot tend to talk of this point now, but ſtay till I know that I am called of God to the fellowſhip of his Son, and then I will ſhew you that I am Elect, and that my name is written in the Book of Life.

If poor diſtreſſed ſouls would obſerve this Order, they might ſave themſelves the trouble of an unprofitable labour under theſe unſeaſonable and Soul-ſinking doubts.

Let us therefore, upon the ſight of our wretchedneſs, fly and venturouſly leap into the Arms of Chriſt, which are now as open to receive us into his Boſom, as they were when nailed to the Croſs. This is coming to Chriſt for Life aright; this is right *runing away from thy Maſter to him*, as was ſaid before. And for this we have multitudes of Scriptures to ſupport, incourage, and comfort us in our ſo doing.

But now let him that doth thus, be ſure to look for it, for Satan will be with him to morrow, to ſee if he can get him again to his old ſervice; and if he cannot do that, then will he enter into diſpute with him, to wit about whether he be elect to Life, and called indeed to partake of this Chriſt, to whom he is fled for ſuccour, or whether he comes to him of his own preſumptuous mind. Therefore we are bid, as to come, ſo to Arm our ſelves with that Armour which God has provided; that we may reſiſt, quench, ſtand againſt, and withſtand all the

the Fiery Darts of the Devil, *Ephes.* 6. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

If therefore thou findeſt Satan in this Order to march againſt thee, remember that thou hadſt this *Item* about it; and betake thy ſelf to Faith and good Courage; and be ſober, and hope to the End.

Object. *But how if I ſhould have ſinned the ſin unpardonable, or That called the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt.*

Anſw. If thou haſt, thou art loſt for ever: But yet before it is concluded by thee that thou haſt ſo ſinned, know that they that would be ſaved by Jeſus Chriſt through faith in his blood, cannot be counted for ſuch.

1. Becauſe of the Promiſe, for that muſt not be fruſtrate: And that ſays, *And him that cometh to Chriſt, he will in no wiſe caſt.* And again, *Whoſo will, let him take of the Water of Life freely,* Joh. 6. 37. Rev. 21. 6. chap. 22. 17.

But, I ſay, how can theſe Scriptures be fulfilled, if he that would indeed be ſaved as before, has ſinned the ſin unpardonable? The Scriptures muſt not be made void, nor their truth be caſt to the ground. Here's a Promiſe, and here's a Sinner; a Promiſe, that ſays he ſhall not

be caſt out that comes; and the ſinner comes, wherefore he muſt be received: Conſequently, he that comes to Chriſt for life, has not, cannot have ſinned that ſin for which there is no forgiveneſs.

And this might ſuffice for an anſwer to any coming ſoul, that fears, though he comes, that he has ſinned the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt.

2. But again, He that has ſinned the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt cannot come, has no heart to come; can by no means be made willing to come to Jeſus Chriſt for life; for that he has received ſuch an opinion of him, and of his things, as deters and holds him back.

1. He counteth this bleſſed Perſon, this Son of God, a *Magician*, a *Conjurer*, a *Witch*, or one that did, when he was in the World, what he did, by the *power*, and ſpirit of the Devil, *Mat.* 9. 34. *Mat.* 12. 24, 25, *&c.* *Mat.* 3. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30. Now he that has this opinion of this Jeſus, cannot be willing to caſt himſelf at his foot for life, &c. to come to him as the only way to God, and to Salvation. And hence 'tis ſaid again, that ſuch an one puts him to open ſhame, and treadeth him under foot, that is, by contemning, reproaching, vilifying,

lifying, and deſpiſing of him, as if he were the vileſt one, or the greateſt Cheat in the World: and has therefore, as to his eſteem of him, called him accurſed, crucified him to himſelf, or counted him one hanged, as one of the worſt of Malefactors, *Heb.* 6. 6. And *chap.* 10. 29. 1 *Cor.* 12. 3.

2. *His Blood*, which is the meritorious cauſe of mans redempton, even the blood *of the everlaſting Covenant, he counteth an unholy thing*, or that which has no more vertue in it to ſave a Soul from ſin, than has the blood of a Dog, *Heb.* 10. 29. For when the Apoſtle ſays, *he counts it an unholy thing*; he means, he makes it of leſs value than that of a *Sheep* or *Cow*, which were clean according to the Law. And therefore muſt mean, that his blood was of no more worth to him in his account, than was the blood of a *Dog*, an *Aſs*, or a *Swine*, which always was, as to ſacrifices, rejected by the God of Heaven, as unholy, or unclean.

Now he who has no better eſteem of Jeſus Chriſt, and of his Death and blood, will not be perſwaded to come to him for Life, or to truſt in him for Salvation.

3. But further, all this muſt be done againſt manifeſt Tokens to prove the contrary,

contrary, or after the ſhining of Goſpel Light upon the ſoul, or ſome conſiderable profeſſion of him as the *Meſſias*, or that he was the Saviour of the World.

1. It muſt be done againſt manifeſt tokens to prove the contrary; and thus the reprobate Jews committed it, when they ſaw the works of God which put forth themſelves in him, and called them the works of the Devil and *Bellzebub*.

2. It muſt be done againſt ſome ſhining light of the Goſpel *upon them*. And thus it was with *Judas*, and with thoſe, who after they were enlightned, and had taſted, and had felt, ſomething of the powers of the World to come, fell away from the Faith of him, and put him to open ſhame and diſgrace, *Heb.* 6. 5, 6.

3. It muſt alſo be done after, and in oppoſition to ones own open profeſſion of him. *For if after they have eſcaped the pollution of the World, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, they are again intangled therein, and overcome; the latter end is worſe with them than the beginning; for it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteouſneſs, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy Commandment, (which is the Word of Faith) delivered unto them.*

4.

4. All this muſt be done *openly*, before *witneſſes*, in the Face, Sight, and View of the World, by *Word*, and *Act*. *This is the ſin that is unpardonable*; and he that hath *thus* done, can *never*, 'tis *impoſſible* he ever ſhould be renewed again *to* repentance. and that for a double reaſon; firſt ſuch an one doth ſay, *he will not*; and of him God ſays, *he ſhall not* have the benefit of Salvation by him.

Object. *But if this be the ſin unpardonable, why is it called the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, and not rather the ſin againſt the Son of God?*

Anſw. It is called the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, becauſe ſuch count the works he did, which were done by the Spirit of God, the works of the ſpirit of the Devil. Alſo becauſe all ſuch as ſo reject Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, they do it in deſpight of that teſtimony which the Holy Ghoſt has given of him in the Holy Scriptures; for the Scriptures are the breathings of the Holy Ghoſt, as in all other things, ſo in that teſtimony they bear of the Perſon, of the Works, Sufferings, Reſurrection, and Aſcention of Jeſus Chriſt.

Sinner, *This is the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt.* What ſayſt thou? Haſt thou committed

committed it; nay, I know thou haſt not, if thou wouldſt be ſaved by Chriſt. Yea, 'tis impoſſible thou ſhoudſt have done it; if indeed thou wouldſt be ſaved by him. No man can deſire to be ſaved by him, whom he yet judgeth to be an Impoſtor, a Magician, a Witch. No man can hope for redemption by that Blood which he yet counteth an unholy thing. Nor will God ever ſuffer ſuch an one to repent, who has, after light, and profeſſion of him, thus horribly, and Devil-like, contemned and trampled upon him.

True, Words, and Wars, and Blaſphemies againſt this Son of Man are pardonable; but then they muſt be done ignorantly and in unbelief. Alſo all blaſphemous thoughts are likewiſe ſuch as may be paſſed by, if the Soul afflicted with them, indeed is ſorry for them, 1 *Tim.* 1. 13, 14, 15. *Mar* 3. 28.

All but this, Sinner, all but this! if God had ſaid he will forgive one ſin, it had been undeſerved Grace: But when he ſays, he will pardon all *but* one, this is grace to the height. Nor is that one unpardonable otherwiſe, but becauſe the Saviour that ſhould ſave them is rejected and put away.

Jacob's Ladder, Christ is *Jacob*'s Ladder that reacheth up to Heaven, and he that refuseth to go by this Ladder thither, will scarce by other means get up so high. There is none other name given under Heaven among men, whereby we must be saved. There is none other Sacrifice for sin than his; he *also*, and he *only*, is the Mediator that reconcileth men to God. And, Sinner, if thou wouldst be saved by him, his Benefits are thine; yea, though thou art a great and *Jerusalem*-Transgressor.

F I N I S.

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